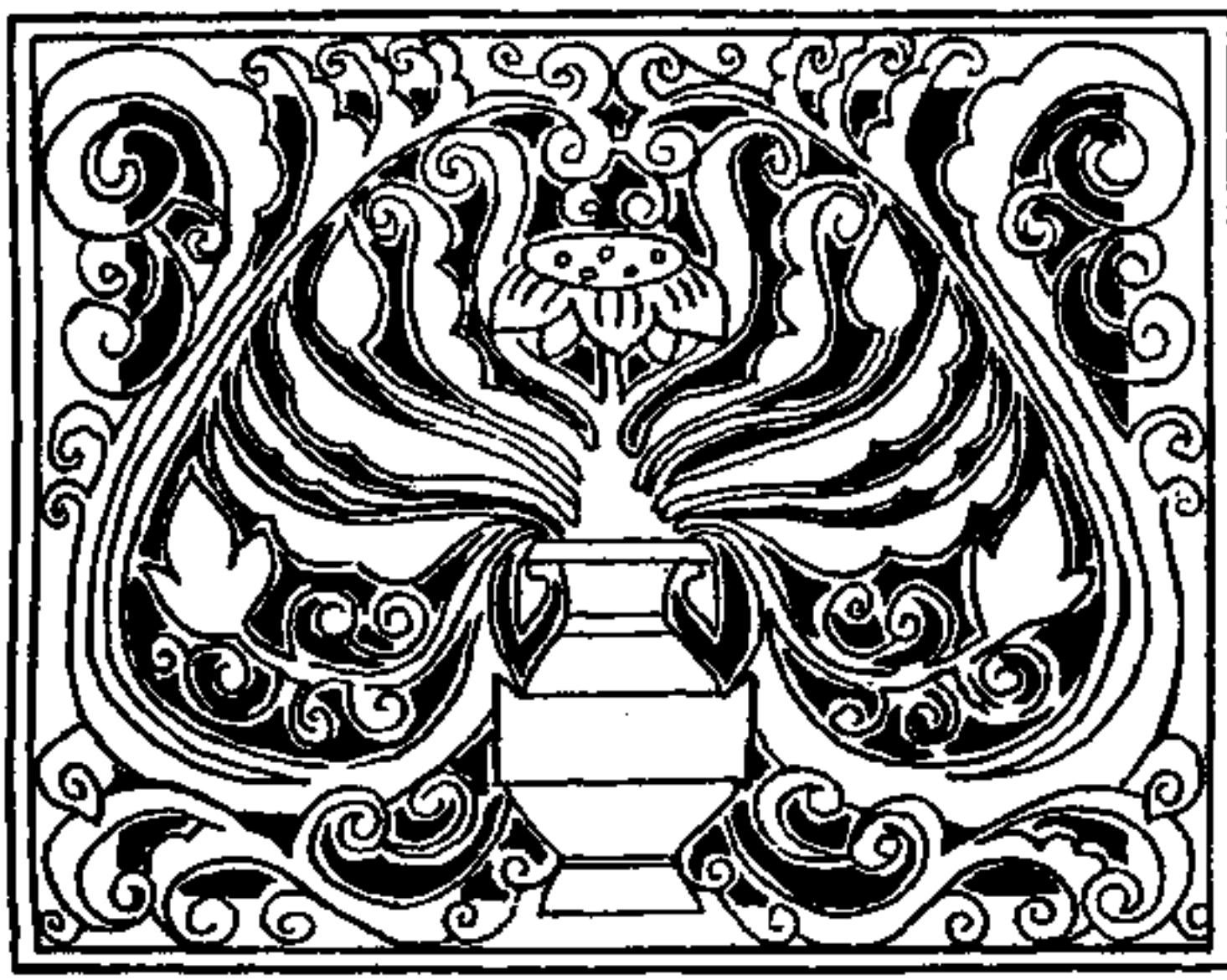




PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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Cover: A Panoramic view of Advaita
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OCTOBER 1999

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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 104

OCTOBER 1999

No. 10

VEDIC PRAYERS

बृहस्पते सदमित्रः सुगं कृधि
शं योर्यत्ते मनुहितं तदीमहे।
रथं न दुर्गाद्विसवः सुदानवो
विश्वस्मान्नो अंहसो निष्पिपर्तन॥
—Rg Veda, 1.106.5

देवैर्नो देव्यदितिर्निपात
देवस्त्राता त्रायतामप्रयुच्छन्।
तन्नो मित्रो वरुणो मामहन्ता-
मदितिः सिन्धुः पृथिवी उत द्यौः॥
—Rg Veda, 1.106.7

यज्ञो देवानां प्रत्येति सुम्ना-
मादित्यासो भवता मृळयन्तः।
आ वोऽर्वाची सुमतिर्ववृत्त्या-
दंहोश्चिद्या वरिवोवित्तरासत्॥
—Rg Veda, 1.107.1

मा नः शंसो अररुषो
धूर्तिः प्रणङ्मर्त्यस्य।
रक्षा णो ब्रह्मणस्पते॥
—Rg Veda, 1.18.3

O Brhaspati! We implore you to grant us happiness always. We also implore you to grant us the strength you possess to cure diseases and destroy all fears; for, this strength will be a great blessing to human beings. Just as able charioteers steer their chariots through dangerous paths to safety, may these gods, benefactors and providers of shelter, destroy all our sins and protect us.

May Aditi, the mother of gods, along with her children, protect us always. May the brilliant Savitā be ever alert to protect us. May Mitra, Varuṇa, Aditi, Sindhu, Pṛthvī and Dyaus protect us.

May our sacrifices be pleasing to gods. O Ādityas (ie gods)! Please be benevolent towards us. May your faces, so full of grace, be turned towards us. By your grace, may the poor and needy amongst us have plenty of wealth.

May not the jealous insults of wicked and harmful people influence us in any way. O Brahmanaspati! Please protect us.

Durgā in Psychology

EDITORIAL

Mother Durgā comes every year. We enjoy holidays, spend money, wear new clothes, eat delicious food, go on tours, read special numbers of magazines, meet relatives and friends, worship the Mother with floral offerings—and Durgā Pūjā ends. Does Durgā Pūjā mean only this much: a socio-religious carnival with some spiritual element in some cases? Or, is there any other significance to the worship of the Mother?

Yes, there is. Several aspects of Durgā worship have been studied by great scholars, but there could be several others. Mother Durgā of course grants liberation and spiritual well-being. She also removes fear, it is said. Here is an attempt to discuss the problem of fear, how Durgā removes fear, and thereby, how Durgā Pūjā contributes wonderfully to the field of psychology also.

The Power of the Unconscious

According to Sāṃkhya and Yoga there are only two entities: the conscious Puruṣa and the unconscious Prakṛti. Puruṣa is the silent witness in whose presence Prakṛti functions. All the multifarious things we see and experience—our own ego, mind, body, the world, and so on—are all the creation of Prakṛti. What is this Prakṛti made up of? Prakṛti is nothing but the three qualities (*guṇas*)—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Puruṣa is beyond the three *guṇas*.

So, according to Sāṃkhya and Yoga, the human being is Consciousness enveloped and overpowered by the unconscious. Mind is unconscious. The faint reflection of Puruṣa on the mind is mistaken as the Puruṣa itself, as 'I', due to ignorance (*tasya heturavidyā*—Yoga Sūtras, 2.24). The real consciousness is dominated by the unconscious, by this false 'I'. What is the mind? According to Sāṃkhya and Vedānta, mind is that inner organ (*an-*

taḥkaraṇa) which vacillates between decision and indecision (*saṃkalpa-vikalpātmikā*). When the same mind remembers, it is called *citta* (*anusandhānātmikā*). This *citta* is a store of past impressions—of actions not only of this life, but of hundreds of past lives. These latent impressions are called *saṃskāras*. Bypassing details, we may just say that these *saṃskāras* affect our conscious lives thoroughly: our present and future depend upon *saṃskāras*—both good and bad. In order to attain *kaivalya* we must be free from the hold of *saṃskāras* completely, says Yoga. Western psychology also says that each individual has a conscious mind as well as an unconscious. The unconscious is the store of past impressions plus the emotions associated with them. It is these past impressions that goad us to action. Almost all our actions, according to psychologists, are conditioned by the unconscious. Geraldine Coster writes:¹

We are unwilling to believe, and yet it is a fact, that a comparatively small proportion of our daily thoughts and feelings, thoughts and actions are conscious, aware, self-chosen and self-directed. Actually many of us are content to be the prey of moods of whose real origin we are unaware. We live or endeavour to live by a system of morality that we have accepted without considering its real implications. We smoke and drink, play cards, go to dinner parties...and belong to various organizations, not because we have chosen these activities for ourselves, but because our environment has indicated them to us, and they pass the time. We do not live our lives, but are lived....

1. Geraldine Coster, *Yoga and Western Psychology* (London: Harper Colophon, 1972), p. 69. [Hereafter *Western Psychology*.]

The western method is to study only this life, because there is no belief in past lives. It is the childhood experiences that condition later life, say the psychologists. The Hindu system, however, knows that there are past lives, and so life is not restricted to the present one alone. To study us only in our present state is like studying a single link in a long, long chain.

Devas and Asuras

Though we are driven by our unconscious, we have some freedom to act, to listen to sane advice, and to choose between good and bad. If we habitually choose to be bad, if we do not listen to the good in us, we become bad. 'As one acts, as one behaves, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action,' says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.4.5). To become bad is to move away from the centre of gravity in us. We spoke about the three qualities which make up Prakṛti. It is the fundamental law of evolution that from the subtlest state to the grossest it is a gradual lowering from pure *sattva* to gross *tamas*. The nearer we are to our centre, which is the Self, the more *sāttvic*, the more peaceful, and the more composed we shall be. The farther away from it, the more *tāmasic* we shall be. Slowly, by moving more and more away from the centre of gravity, we lose balance of ourselves. Fear envelops us. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.7.1) says, 'When the self makes the smallest division in this One, then, for him there is fear.' Separation from the centre causes fear. Why fear? *Dvītiyād vai bhayaṃ* (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.4.20), duality alone causes fear. Sri Ramakrishna says, 'Under the spell of God's māyā man forgets his true nature. He forgets that he is heir to the infinite glories of his Father.'² The real 'I' and the false 'I'—there will be two, and the false 'I', which in fact is nothing but a product of the unconscious,

loses touch with the real One and so there is fear. A beautiful example is given in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*. There are two birds sitting on a tree. One of them is on a lower branch. It eats sweet fruits and is happy, eats bitter fruits and is unhappy. The other bird sits at the top of the tree eating nothing, but is ever blissful. The lower bird sees it and, surprised at its constant bliss, slowly goes towards the upper bird. When it reaches the other bird, it comes to know that the two were non-different. We, owing to over-indulgence, that is, over-attachment to the false 'I', have been cut off from the Puruṣa. Cajole the baby who is crying for her mother and try to stop her from crying in various ways: if she is hungry, try to feed her; if she has pain, try to cure it. But all the same she cries on because she wants her mother. Even so, all the rest of our problems stem from this one fundamental problem: the cutting off from the centre owing to over-involvement with the world.

Depending on our behaviour, we are classified into groups. The most popular Indian classification is into good and bad. In our scriptures, we read about gods and demons—*devas* and *asuras*—and about their conflicts. When life was simple, clear distinction between good people and bad people was perhaps possible. Now, however, it has become difficult. Swamiji writes in his *Letters* that earlier there were thieves but now there is corruption. Thieves can be caught but corruption is so widespread that the corrupt cannot be isolated. When there was a power outage in some developed country, its citizens, who were otherwise noble, were reported to have looted shops like ordinary larcenists. Nowadays, therefore, we are all a mixture of both gods and demons, though the proportion may vary. That is, though we may all be good, the bad element in us can overpower us any moment.

The Problem of Fear

Society may call someone a bad man, but there are moments when he feels the need to be good. He is helpless in being bad. So also,

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1985), p. 218. [Hereafter *Gospel*.]

the so-called good people are tempted to do bad things but control themselves with great difficulty. Arjuna asks Lord Kṛṣṇa, 'O scion of Vṛṣṇis, why do people commit sin (ie, become bad) in spite of themselves?' Kṛṣṇa answers that lust and anger are born of *rajas* and that the aspirant should first of all control his senses which lead to lust and anger so as not to commit sin.³ When we are active, it is the *rajas* that is working in us. This quality goads us to various actions, both good and bad. Many a time, all of us feel that the bad is more powerful in us. We are always afraid of its overcoming us. We fear we are doomed. Just one example. How hard it is for the spiritual aspirant to control his lust, anger, etc! There is always the danger and fear of falling. Repeated failure will convince the aspirant that the evil is more powerful than the good. Now, such conflicts sometimes lead to serious consequences. Continuing inner conflicts between 'to do' or 'not to do', and 'to be' or 'not to be' leads to mental illness, which psychologists term as neurosis (mild type) or psychosis (madness).

There are four characteristics of living beings: food, rest, enjoyment and fear (*āhāra*, *nidrā*, *maithuna* and *bhaya*). The first three are known. The last one is fear. What is this fear? Many people say that they do not have any fear at all. Is it this fear we are talking about? The fear mentioned above as *bhaya* is existential in nature. In our busy, routine life we are only avoiding and forgetting it, but it is lurking inside. Millions and millions of normal people like us who are otherwise all right are, in fact, suffering from fear, which is expressed in the form of fear of death (*abhiniveśa*), lack of security, losing in a competitive world, unfulfilment, guilt, losing grip, and so on. In silent moments, when we are left to face ourselves, it crops up. It is this fear that is goading us to go for various things so that we may forget it. Many problems stem from this basic, existential fear alone and 'most of the fears and uncertainties by which human beings are

bent can be grouped under one of the two headings—fear of change and fear of wrongdoing.⁴ Our 'addictions, functional nervous disorders, chronic indigestion, skin diseases, kleptomania, timidity, violent temper, other family problems,' religious conflicts, all arise out of this existential fear alone. Therefore, the greatest need is to cure us of this ailment, instead of trying to go for superficial remedies. Swamiji therefore wanted us to be fearless. He repeatedly asserted that the one teaching of the Upaniṣads is fearlessness.

The Psychologists' Solution

In passing, we must know something about psycho-analysis. Extreme conflicts lead to mental illness. The method Freud discovered to cure mental illness was that of psycho-analysis, which consists of free association—talking out one's mind before an analyst who is a mute witness. While talking, all suppressed past impressions plus their associated emotions come out. This free association itself is the cure. This talking is not completed in a day or two; such sessions are stretched over months. When the mentally ill go to a doctor, they expect the doctor to 'take the whole responsibility of the treatment and to bring about a cure. The analyst is thus at a serious disadvantage, for whereas an ordinary physician can administer to a trusting patient drugs calculated to produce certain physical effects...the analyst can do nothing at all⁵ without the patient's cooperation. When we go to a doctor, how do we approach him? With absolute faith—faith that the doctor will cure us. Much work has been done in recent times to show that faith in God cures the patient of mental stress.

The Durgā Image

Mother Durgā! In the religious world, there is no other image so full and wholesome, so composite and all-encompassing, as that of Mother Durgā. The composite image contains both good and bad: it is the only instance where the Mother is worshipped

3. *Bhagavadgītā*, 3.36,37.

4. *Western Psychology*, p. 39.

5. *Western Psychology*, p. 31.

along with the demon whom She has killed. It contains everything that we need. In fact, Durgā image can be taken as a symbolic representation of the human being. From down below, the beheaded buffalo (*tamas*), the demon (*rajas*), the lion (*sattva*), the Mother Herself, beyond all *guṇas* (the Self), in all Her splendour, the goddesses Lakṣmī (*manas*) and Sarasvatī (*buddhi*), the deities Gaṇeśa (*citta*) and Kārtika or Kārtikeya (*ahamkāra*), and the backdrop of painted pictures (subliminal impressions)—this is the image. In a span of just three days, a unique and extraordinary worship, full of emotion, full of power and glory, which has no parallel, takes place.

What does the Durgā image signify? It shows that just as there is both good and bad in us, the image also has them, but with a difference. In us, there is the eternal conflict between good and bad; we are always afraid of the bad. We are scared that any moment we may be overpowered by the bad in us. But look at the Mother! Though she is a small girl, (*kumārī*, one who destroys evil tendencies), she has already pierced her trident into the chest of the demon and beheaded his false buffalo form.

As we said earlier, the first thing that an ordinary doctor or a psycho-analyst does is to establish confidence and faith in his patient. 'Oh! That is nothing; it can be cured,' are the magic words that do everything for the patient, who, having heard so much about his ailment, might be terrified that perhaps it cannot be cured at all. Similarly here, the first thing we achieve seeing Mother Durgā's image is faith: faith that evil *can* be conquered after all. This is fundamental to any growth: spiritual, intellectual, moral, or even physical.

How Mother Works

Now, the cure itself. 'It not infrequently happens that a person undergoing analysis expects the impossible, expects to have his character made over for him by a kind of miracle. For a payment of cash he is to be changed....'⁶ If a ordinary human being, who sits there as a therapist for some money, can

be believed in, can the Divine Mother Durgā not be believed? 'Nonsense! To have faith in a clay image?' you may say. 'Certainly He [God] is not the clay image!' remarked M., the recorder of Sri Ramakrishna's words, to the latter. 'But why clay? It is an image of Spirit.... Suppose there is an error in worshipping the clay image; doesn't God know that through it He alone is being invoked? He will be pleased with that very worship,' retorted Sri Ramakrishna. This time M. felt that his ego was completely crushed.⁷ If an ordinary psycho-analyst can cure mental ailments, God, who has created everything, can very well remove our existential fear.

We said that a psycho-analyst will have several sittings, stretched over a period of several months, to listen to his patient's unconscious tapes. In the case of Mother Durgā, She comes once a year for three days and listens to our woes. We open our hearts before the Mother. This 'free association' and transference of our emotions on Her will have their effect. The Durgā image has everything: there is calm as there is valour, there is love as there is hate, there is compassion as there is cruelty. All our emotions can be expressed there. Emotions, when sublimated, take us to the Divine.

She bestows faith, all right; but how can past *saṁskāras* be destroyed? Yoga declares that *saṁskāras* have to be destroyed and that can be done by God's grace only. How can Durgā destroy our past impressions? In the Vedas, She is called the Power residing in actions and their fruits:

I take refuge in her, the goddess Durgā, who is fiery in lustre and radiant with ardency, who is the Power belonging to the Supreme who manifests Himself manifoldly, who is the Power residing in actions and their fruits (ie *saṁskāras*) rendering them efficacious. O thou goddess skilled in saving, thou takest us across difficulties excellently well. Our saluta-

6. *Western Psychology*, p. 19.

7. *Gospel*, p. 80.

tions to thee.⁸

Mother Durgā is called *bhaya-hārini*, the remover of fear. She is also called *durgati-nāśini*, the destroyer of inauspiciousness. Her name is Durgā because just by remembering her, she removed the grave distress (*durge*) caused by enemies to Indra and bestowed fearlessness on him.⁹ How does the Mother do that? Let us look at the image of the Mother again. We can compare the buffalo with *taṃas*, the demon with *rajas* and the lion with *sattva*. The Divine Mother is beyond the three qualities, she is our Self. The buffalo is killed, the demon is about to be killed as Durgā binds him with her snake (*nāga-pāṣa*) and thrusts her trident into his heart, and the lion is of course the vehicle of the Mother. Sri Ramakrishna narrates a beautiful story of three robbers who robbed a rich man of all his wealth in a forest. One of them (*taṃas*) said, 'Kill the rich man.' The second robber (*rajas*) stopped him from doing so but suggested that they bind him to a tree so that the rich man may not be able to inform the police. They did so and went away. But after a while, the third robber (*sattva*) came back, sympathized with the rich man and released him. He showed him out of the jungle, too. When the rich man invited his benefactor to his place, the third robber said that he could not do that because the police would arrest him, and saying this he went away. Even *sattva* cannot take us to God, says Sri Ramakrishna.

The *taṃas* of those who worship Mother Durgā has been killed already (because Durgā Pūjā itself means a lot of activity!). But the conflict between the good (*sattva*) and the bad (*rajas*)—the lion and the demon—is going on and we fear losing the battle. By seeing Durgā,

we gain faith that we shall win the battle. And just as the Mother comes from the cold Himalayas each year to receive our worship, the Self slowly comes out of 'cold storage', lives of neglect, and induces us to action. By worshipping the Divine Mother, our *rajas* will certainly be conquered, and our *sattva* will show the path to her lotus feet.

Mother Grants Liberation

Durgā removes our fear and destroys our *saṃskaras*. What else does she do? Durgā, whose name is also Umā, is none other than *brahmavidyā*, the supreme Knowledge personified. In the *Kena Upaniṣad* the goddess Umā Haimavatī bestows real knowledge to Indra and others. Commenting on the mantra (3.12) of this Upaniṣad, Śaṃkara says that Haimavatī is she who is bedecked with several golden ornaments and is dazzling (absolute purity and knowledge brings glow to a person). In his commentary on a *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* mantra, Sāyaṇa says that the term Umā means *brahmavidyā* because the daughter of Himavat is the personification of *brahmavidyā*.¹⁰ This personification of *brahmavidyā* destroys our ignorance by a mere glance. And that is exactly what we need: the existential fear which we have is only because of ignorance, thinking of the unconscious as Consciousness. The Mother removes that. If we stand in front of Durgā, who is the personification of *brahmavidyā*, and pray with longing and sincerity to her, she will not only destroy our *saṃskāras* but also relieve us of the hold of Prakṛti by destroying our ignorance. Once ignorance goes, we become fearless: we win the war against the *guṇas*, against Prakṛti, against the unconscious, and know we are the Puruṣa. Thus we are freed from fear. □

8. *Tām-agni-varṇāṃ tapasā jvalantīm
vairocanīm karma-phaleṣu juṣṭām;
Durgāṃ devīm śaraṇam-aham prapadye
sutarasi tarase namaḥ.
—Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad, 2.2.*

9. *Smaraṇād-abhaye durge tāritā ripu-saṅkaṭe;
Devāḥ śakrādayo yasmāt-tena durgā prakīrtitā.
—Devī Purāṇa.*

10. *Himavat-putryā gauryā brahmavidyābhīmāni-
rūpatvād ... umā-śabdo brahmavidyām-upa-
lakṣyati.*

IMAGES OF INDIA'S PAST

Emperor Learns a Lesson...

The tired Chandragupta Maurya had taken refuge by a poor woman's house, and nobody in those parts knew him to be the great Emperor. The woman had given her son *chapatis* to eat. The son ate only the middle portion of the *chapatis* and threw away the portion surrounding it. Seeing this, the poor woman exclaimed: 'What is this? You eat like Chandragupta attacks kingdoms!' Chandragupta became all alert hearing his name mentioned. The boy asked: 'Why, mother, do you compare me with the great monarch?' 'What else am I to do? You eat the way Chandragupta attacks kingdoms. He forgets that he should conquer the towns surrounding the kingdoms first so that he can safely attack the kingdom itself. In his ambition to be the supreme monarch, he forgets simple safety measures. So I said this.' Chandragupta learnt a great lesson that night.

Electing a Ruler

When King Shashanka passed away in Bengal (in the 7th century of our era), there was great confusion and turmoil for about a century. The people of Bengal thought that things cannot go on in this manner. So they all decided to elect a leader who would rule them. And Gopala was elected. Thus began a new dynasty in Bengal called the Pala dynasty. Historians have failed to find a second example to this 'political sagacity and the spirit of sacrifice of the leading men of Bengal.'

The Hippocrates of India

Charaka says in his *Samlhita*: 'Not for self, not for the fulfilment of any earthly desire of gain, but solely for the good of suffering humanity should you treat your patients and so excel all.' Charaka lived in the 3rd century AD.

No Small Wonder!

In 927 CE two Indian surgeons successfully trepanned (ie, made a perforation using surgical instruments) the skull of a king and made him insensitive to the surgery by administering a drug called *sammohini*.

Metallurgical Excellence

India had achieved great technological competence in metallurgy before the 3rd century CE. A.L.Basham writes: '...the casting of the pure-copper Buddha at Sultanganj in Bihar and the welding of wrought-iron shapes to complete the Iron Pillar near Delhi cannot fail to inspire the highest respect.'

'I was Swamiji's Friend'

PRAVRAJIKA PRABUDDHAPRANA

Josephine MacLeod passed away on 11 October 1949. On her 50th death anniversary we pay our respectful homage to Tantine. The author, from Sarada Math, has written an exhaustive life of MacLeod titled Tantine: The Life of Josephine MacLeod.

She was a tall figure, with her back held straight and head held high. Whatever she said with her sharp wit and commanding tone, she could not but be obeyed. She was Josephine MacLeod, and she *knew* who she was; there was no doubt about it. One evening at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture in Calcutta, in its very early days, this American lady was going to speak about Swami Vivekananda. She was introduced as Miss Josephine MacLeod, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. The imperious lady at once stood up and protested: 'I was *not* his disciple, I was Swamiji's *friend*.'

Miss MacLeod, known as Tantine, was indeed Swami Vivekananda's close companion. She lived her long life with undaunted, undiminished faith that by his grace she was free. She said, 'It was to set me free that Swamiji came and that was as much a part of his mission as it was to give renunciation to Nivedita, or unity to dear Mrs Sevier. But it is in renunciation that India's great spiritual gift lies.... I haven't any renunciation. But I've freedom, freedom to see and help India to grow. That's my job, and I love it. To see this group of fiery idealists [the Ramakrishna Movement] burning new paths and outlets from this jungle called life.'

She told the young monks trained in the Ramakrishna Math, 'He came because I came; and I came because he came. We are each necessary for His work. No one can be excluded. You are the children of Vivekananda!... Whoever saw him, revered him,

would never care for anyone else. And whenever he began some talk—as when the discussion arose about the necessity to keep the street-drains clean for the improvement of the citizens' health—he would inevitably end the discussion with the philosophy of Advaita.'

The time has come, 'when the growth of the Ramakrishna Movement is making its telling the concern of professional historians,' when, as Swami Vidyatmananda predicted, 'Tantine would be a familiar and favourite figure.'

Josephine MacLeod was born on 26 December 1858. Her character developed with the strength which comes from adjusting to rapidly changing situations. Her mother died when she was twelve years old and she lost one of her two brothers and one of her two sisters by the time she was seventeen. It was natural that she would form a very close relationship with her surviving elder sister, Besse (or Betty), with whom she went to live in New York. When Betty married William Sturges, a big businessman, Josephine continued to live with her sister. The Sturges family travelled a lot because of Mr Sturges' business contacts, and while Betty was engaged in entertaining and social climbing, Joe often stayed with Betty's two children, arranging for their education and managing the household, though too preoccupied with questions about religion and God to be interested in a household for herself. Betty lived very comfortably but Joe cared the least about comfort. Both sisters were always dressed in the best of Paris fash-

ions and Joe, attractive and charming, was followed about by various suitors. But she was too independent and spirited to be caught. She could not tolerate their possessiveness. 'You can't catch Josie,' she would say, 'she's not running this world or the next.'

Swami Vivekananda later wrote to her: 'The natural ambition of a woman is, through marriage, climb up, leaning upon a man. But those days are gone. You shall be great without the help of any man, just as you are.'

In 1893, William Sturges became involved in a lawsuit over his business. He broke down in court and died soon after. Then the sisters lived at Dobbs Ferry, a village on Hudson River, thirty miles north of New York City. Betty, left with two growing children, became more and more dependent upon a friend of the family, Frank Leggett, who like Sturges, was a big businessman. Leggett, a multimillionaire, used to visit the sisters often and was a great support to them in their grief. A couple of years later, Joe's father died.

Witnessing of all these deaths in her family made Joe more interested in religion. Spiritualism and mysticism were popular fads among ladies of leisure in the late 19th century America. Joe had picked up a copy of the *Bhagavadgita* in a bookshop and began to study and memorize it. Joe had a friend, Dora, who was a psychic. One day, Dora wrote a note to Joe at Dobbs Ferry that a wonderful man from India, Swami Vivekananda, was to lecture a few days later in New York. Although Joe had then turned thirty-seven, she counted her real birth from that day, 29 January 1895. Joe and Betty sat on the floor in the front. The Swami soon entered and stood in one corner. He was dressed in a robe of flame-orange which was dulled by the fire in his eyes. From the first words she heard him speak, she said she knew that this was the greatest man she would ever meet. 'His presence was dynamic,' she described. 'You can-

not pass on that power unless you have it, just as you cannot give money away unless you have it.... From that moment life had a different import. It was as if he made you realize that you were in eternity....'

Years later, Joe told the Greek writer, Kazantzakis, her first impressions of Vivekananda, 'the fiery missionary whose physique was like a wrestler's and whose eyes were deep black.' She said, 'His voice was deep and very sweet. Vivekananda told us how man can free himself from passions and feel that all are his brothers, and that that is the way to liberation. He believed that all religions worship one God by following their own creed, time and circumstances. This one God apparently manifests Itself in different forms.... When he finished the lecture, I stood up and said to myself, "I am of the same opinion. I will follow him."'

From that day, Joe went with Betty to the Swami's lectures three times a week, all through that winter. Two seats in the front were always kept for them. Sometimes Betty brought her children with her. Joe one day heard Vivekananda lecture on the *Bhagavadgita*. She later recalled: 'More than a hundred persons were present; they were all seated in the room when Swamiji started speaking...I lifted my eyes and saw with these very eyes Krishna himself standing there and preaching the *Gita*. That was my first wonderful vision. I stared and stared...I saw only the figure and all else vanished.'

For a long time Joe and Betty went to the classes and left without speaking to the Swami. One day, he asked them, 'Are you sisters?' 'Yes,' they answered. 'Do you come from very far?' 'No, not very far, about thirty miles up the Hudson.' 'So far? That is wonderful!' These rich ladies, taking so much trouble to come to hear him three times a week surely impressed Vivekananda. But for whatever trouble they took to hear him, the

whole family got peace and consolation and courage to go on in spite of their grief. Joe wrote: 'His power lay in the courage he gave to others. He did not ever seem to be conscious of himself at all. It was the other man who interested him.... He used to make us realize there was nothing secular in life, it was all holy.' He told her, 'Always remember you are *incidentally* an American and a woman, but always a child of God. Tell yourself day and night who you are. Never forget it.'

One day Joe went to Vivekananda and asked him, 'Swami, will you tell us how to meditate?' He answered, 'Meditate on the word *Om* for a week and come again and tell me.' After a week, Joe came and told him that she saw a glow in her heart when she meditated. Vivekananda said, 'Good. Keep on.' At last, one evening before going to hear Vivekananda lecture, Joe and Betty were having dinner at the Waldorf Hotel with Frank Leggett. When he found out that they were going to a lecture, he asked to accompany them. After the lecture, Frank introduced himself to the Swami and invited him for dinner. Joe and Betty were also invited and so they began to know the Swami intimately. He was their guest at Ridgely Manor, Frank's country estate in New York's Catskill Mountains, and to his fishing camp at Percy, New Hampshire, where he felt rested in the silence and solitude of the country after nearly two years of intense lecturing. It was there that Betty and Frank announced their engagement.

When, in July 1895, Joe accompanied Betty to Paris to prepare for her wedding, Frank invited Vivekananda to join them in Europe later and to attend their marriage. The wedding took place in September and after the honeymoon, all met in London where they again attended Vivekananda's classes. At these classes, Joe met Miss Margaret Noble, a young, enthusiastic and inspired new disciple of the Swami. Margaret always plied the Swami with questions. Joe never did. She

was his intimate friend, and did not want anything from him. Rather she gave him whatever freedom and relief he required from the relentless work of carrying out his mission. She took him to places of interest and introduced him to people who could help him. It was her privilege and pleasure to keep him entertained and amused or to leave him alone when he required that. Vivekananda shared with Joe some of his deepest and loftiest thoughts.

After establishing his work in America and England, Vivekananda returned to India with a clear idea of establishing his monastic order's headquarters to train workers to spread Sri Ramakrishna's ideals throughout India and the world. He also had hopes for establishing a similar centre for women with Holy Mother as its centre of inspiration. Joe was among the small group of American and English followers of Vivekananda who decided to go to India to give him help and support for these projects.

Joe arrived in India in February 1898 and spent nearly a year travelling with Vivekananda. He dedicated this whole year to training these followers and, through them, his future workers. In the West they had seen him as a teacher of Vedanta philosophy, a dignified and charismatic lecturer, theorizing about universal values. In India, however, they saw him not as a prince of orators, but as a shaven-headed monk, a lion of a patriot, who taught his disciples to renounce even their own spiritual liberation for the regeneration of their motherland. Now they saw him *live* Vedanta. They learnt the practical application of his ideas.

Joe, who had made the acquaintance of Mrs Ole Bull in America, now became her intimate friend. Joe and Margaret, who also arrived in India at this time, lived with Mrs Bull as her guest when Vivekananda was able to purchase a large piece of property for the

new monastery. The ladies moved into a dilapidated old house on the property, renovated it and turned it into a heavenly retreat. Margaret was given the vows of *brahmacharya* and Joe and Mrs Bull looked upon her as their daughter. The three fortunate ladies had Vivekananda's company when he visited their house daily and later travelled through northern India with them, spending three months living in houseboats and camps in Kashmir. There they had retreats, during which he chanted and meditated with them for long hours every day.

During this time, he taught them the history and culture of India, and showed them how his ideal was different from that of traditional Indian sadhus. When they passed a group of wandering sadhus, slowly making their way on foot, he pointed out that their self-imposed hardship was in vain. He himself had been through all that and now he felt that the life of a sadhu should be better sacrificed for the service of his fellow human beings, and this was the path he was to show his followers.

Joe saw both of Vivekananda's projects begin: the establishment of his monastic training centre on its own property at Belur, and in the opening of Nivedita's girl's school, the work for women. Joe asked Vivekananda, 'What shall I do?' He replied, 'Love India.' Although Joe had learnt to worship the country which she came to identify with Vivekananda, she could not remain in India then.

When Joe returned to America and to her life with Betty and her family, she again attended parties and social events. Did she enjoy them as before? Yes. Even more! Because she was eager to tell everyone she met that they *are* God. This always embarrassed Betty, who thought it was not the proper subject for dinner parties. Joe wanted to eat on the floor and, now and then, went into solitude. One day after returning from church, she wrote to

Mrs Bull, 'I only thought I was religious because I was ill!' She now had a different idea of religion. Joe had learnt from Vivekananda the worship of the divinity in all. She was filled with a sense of mission. She often deprived herself and lived frugally so that she would have more to give to others. If she was ever depressed, she would go to the city and look at the faces of people in the crowds. That, she said, would give her peace. What did she see in their faces? She combed the whole earth in search of energetic, talented people, geniuses who had the power to translate and disseminate Vivekananda's ideals in whatever their fields of expression. She went from country to country to make more lovers of Vivekananda.

Joe and Mrs Bull had planned that Vivekananda would return with them to America but he had been too ill. However, he did go the following summer of 1899 and stayed with her and the Leggetts at Ridgely Manor. Joe was ecstatic, again having her prophet with her. But soon she received the news that her brother was dying in California and she had to go to him. Vivekananda blessed her as she left Ridgely and told her to arrange for some classes and he would come. As soon as her carriage drove away, Nivedita remarked to Vivekananda, 'Yum Yum [Joe] says that she wants nothing and nobody.' Vivekananda looked up and with a throb in his voice, said, 'No, she doesn't. That's right. It's the last stage one comes to, and then it's all giving.' Coincidentally, her brother was on his deathbed in the home of a lady who was an admirer of Vivekananda, having heard his lectures at the World's Fair Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. After the death of Joe's brother, Vivekananda went to California and Joe had the opportunity to live with and travel with him again in America and from there to eastern Europe on his way back to India.

Joe stopped in Japan but met Viyek-

ananda again in India a couple of months before he passed away in July 1902. With his passing, Joe was plunged in a sea of grief. It took a few years for her to shake off her sorrow. She then resolved to show with her life what she had gained from being Vivekananda's friend and companion. She said, 'It is within the living person that he is manifested. Look at those whom he has trained. It is in the life of the person that you will find him....'

In 1914, again Joe returned to India and set a pattern which she was to follow for most of the next 24 years, spending a part of each year in India. She saw the monastic organization he formed grow and change. She wrote: 'It is Swamiji, bringing back to his race the great sustaining traditions of Hinduism as *lived* by Ramakrishna, that is the new leaven pervading India and overflowing to the whole world!'

All her talks centred around Vivekananda and Vivekananda's India. One morning, at Belur Math, she was coming from the guest-house towards the Math. A few monks, seeing her, gathered round and accompanied her. The first temple she came to on the bank of the Ganga was Vivekananda's. A monk was doing the *puja* in the shrine. The *pujari* was ringing the bell. On hearing the bell, Joe said, 'My worship is not that way; my worship is serving India in whatever way I can.'

Joe said, 'Vivekananda was a lion of a man, the image of courage. Just by seeing him strength would come to one's mind...and the greatest thing is this: that he was as close to us as one of our own family. What! Do you think you can confine him to a seat in the shrine and only wave lights in front of him and thrust food at him? Will you make a cult of him? He detested all that sort of thing. He was a man of flesh and blood. When he was here, he himself would pull up a chair for me, and I sat just near him, wearing such shoes

and fashionable frocks as I do. Wherever he is worshipped today, also, it would be done with that attitude. I am not willing to accept your formal traditions and conventions.'

On the birthday of Swami Vivekananda, in most centres of the Ramakrishna Order, they prepare a meal and offer him the dishes he loved. Joe, in her straightforward way of talking, and with a shocked expression, would ask the monks, 'Do you really think that pleases our Swami? No! You should rather say, it pleases us!'

For a span of two generations after the passing away of the great Swami, it was Josephine MacLeod, more than anyone, who kept alive his spirit. Someone who knew her well remarked, 'She was not his disciple, she was *him*!'

She worked for the Anti-malaria Society and tried to expedite a plan for an irrigation system for the Gangetic plains. Most of all, she did whatever she could to help nation-building organizations of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Joe did not like the monks to have to sleep on the floor for she thought it bad for their health, so she bought a number of beds for them. One morning, at Belur Math, Joe brought a young monk to Swami Shivananda's room. Swami Shivananda was then the President of the Order. Showing the young monk proudly to Swami Shivananda, she said, 'Swamiji wanted hale and hearty boys like this. I want to see the boys looking like this. You have to feed them milk. I will give you money for it.' With that money they bought a few cows. But when she learnt that the cows did not yield much milk, she also imported some Jersey cows, having them shipped by Frank Leggett's nephew. Later she gave them money to start a dairy farm.

She considered Belur Math to be her own

place and the monks her children. She was imperious in her manner and spoke with authority. She liked the dim light of the kerosene lamp in the evening in her room at the Math guest-house. Once, during her absence, electricity was installed in the Math. She did not like it and did not use it as she thought it spoiled the effect of the Ganga in the moonlight. Dim light lent atmosphere. One night one of the monks switched on the light and she said, 'Boy, you dare to do this!' He immediately switched it off.

She stressed the importance of keeping the Math grounds as clean as possible. Whenever she saw any torn scrap of paper or cigarette butt, she would at once pick it up and throw it in a waste bin, setting an example for others.

When the Belur Math College was going to be built, she was very happy and gave a generous contribution. Drupad was Vivekananda's favourite style of Indian music. Some swamis wanted to learn Drupad music from a well-known old musician who was prepared to come to Belur Math every week for that purpose. Joe gladly supplied the money for it. She contributed to the financing of a Sanskrit chair at the Math and also to a dairy. Any project which Vivekananda would have liked had hearty approval and financial aid from her.

She saved the Math more than once from interference by the British Government. In the 1920s she found it useful to keep up friendly relations with the Government. She kept very fashionable lace dresses especially for her occasional visits to the Viceroy. Otherwise, she dressed rather plainly at the Math. One day, Swami Vijayananda went to her room and noticed these dresses and asked her why she kept them there since she always dressed plainly at the Math. A few days later, several young monks were imprisoned by the British on espionage charges, and it was then that

Swami Vijayananda caught sight of Joe stepping into a carriage, dressed in all her finery. Soon the boys were back at the Math. Joe had paid a visit to the Governor and secured their release.

Another time, the Government decided to establish a railway yard alongside the Belur Math property. The impingement of noise and smoke would have been a calamity for the Math. In the face of it, Joe rose like a flaming thunderbolt and stormed the office of the Viceroy. Finally the Government withdrew the plan. Successful, Joe returned from the Viceroy's office in Calcutta to Belur Math by steamer. Meeting her boat, Swami Saradananda, full of smiles, called out from the shore, 'Victory to you, Tantine; victory to you!' Joe, pointing out to Swami Vivekananda's new temple, shouted from the boat in reply, 'Victory to *me*, Swami? Victory to that piece of solid rock who is seated there—the victory is *his*!'

Each year, on the day she met Vivekananda, January 29, she celebrated by giving all the monks a feast, which she also shared with them in their dining hall. Swami Bhuteshananda, who was one of those monks, said, 'We considered Tantine to be one of us.'

In 1938, when Joe was in Almora, the sadhus at the Ramakrishna Kutir wanted to see her and hear her speak about Swamiji. So, on October 11, Joe gave an inspired talk at the house of the Sens nearby. She spoke continuously for nearly three quarters of an hour. According to Swami Atulananda, Joe's talk was an animated talk with gestures and facial expressions. She was emphatic, admonishing the sadhus not to be idle, but to be up and doing. She said: 'Work is religion! Do something. I don't care what it is. Use your hands, your brains. Swamiji said, "To learn is religion." He learnt every day. Always fresh, throwing out new ideas. Learn and work.'

Pointing a finger at one after the other, but fortunately not waiting for a reply, she continued, 'What have you learnt since yesterday? India wants you, the world wants you. Preach Swamiji through work. Uphold Swamiji's banner.'

The same day, she went to the Kutir in a *dandi* and heard that there was a typhoid patient there who was recovering. She told everyone to leave the room; she wanted to be alone with him. She talked to him without a break for half an hour and from there went to a dinner party with the Sens. Joe was then eighty years old. Her nephew described her at that age: 'She is her old self 100%! Reminds me of a combination of an express train, battle attack (bombs, flares, rapid-firing guns, etc) and volcanic earthquake. The world will keep on spinning on its axis at an ever-increasing rate so long as she lives....'

Joe thought it safer to have her money always with her, but to be disciplined enough not to spend it unnecessarily. So she said, 'I can't bear these two things: money in the bank and knowledge in books.' Even in old age, she was prepared mentally and materially to go anywhere any time. In a money bag which she hung round her neck, she carried a thousand dollars or more in rupees, sterling, lire and drachmas, enough cash to take her to Europe, India or America. 'You never know,' she would say. Wherever Joe went, she would some time or another return to Ridgely, a house full of memories. In her room, where the sunlight streamed through two French windows, she kept a large, coloured Chicago poster of Vivekananda nailed to a high-backed Gothic chair, the chair in which Vivekananda used to sit.

Joe was eager to have Vivekananda's ideas and lectures translated into every language. She roamed throughout the world to find writers, translators and publishers. Joe met a talented writer, Dhan Gopal Mukherji,

in 1914 and told him all she could about Vivekananda, and the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna which he taught. She was encouraging Dhan Gopal to write a book about Sri Ramakrishna. The result was a pioneering work, *The Face of Silence*. The book was chosen by the League of Nations as one of the 40 outstanding books of 1926 for the International Library of Geneva.

Mukherji's book begins with the paragraph:

That a holy man, whom many of his followers called an Incarnation of God, lived in recent years near Calcutta, is one of the surprises of our time. Not only that. The most surprising thing about the matter is that I should go straight back from America of the twentieth century, and find his followers leading their medieval life right in the centre of modern progress. These monks and nuns, living so close to the city of Calcutta, touching it at every vital point, yet maintaining their aloofness from it with perfect ease....

After reading *The Face of Silence* and meeting Joe, Romain Rolland, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1915, became interested in Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Romain Rolland was the most influential French writer and thinker of his time. Some of his books have been translated into thirty-five languages. As a result of Joe's frequent visits to his home in Switzerland, he wrote *The Life of Ramakrishna* and *The Life of Vivekananda and His Universal Gospel* in French. He wrote about his interviews with Joe in his journal:

She is free and she knows how to respect the freedom of others, even those whom she loves. She loved Vivekananda very much and she is living with that perpetual joy that her memories bring, and that love, the memory and the joy are disinterested. She loves to take and give the light she finds on her way. She is similar to the

insects which, drinking from the sweet flowers, pollinate by carrying pollen, which is life-giving, from one flower to another.

Swami Shivananda wrote to Joe in 1927: It is for this work Swamiji has still left you in the world—and is making you scour round the world in search of great men. Till everyone in the West be familiar with the lives and teachings of Swamiji and Thakur, you will not get leave to join your dearest—Swami Vivekananda. I wish to be there before you and wait for you to decorate you with the crown of glory.

Swami Virajananda, after working on a biography of Swami Vivekananda for seven years, became discouraged. Joe wrote to him in 1913:

You have so steadily kept your shoulders to the wheel of incessant work in Mayavati. I wonder if you went away for a good two months' holiday, dear Swami, to get a new perspective of yourself and the work that you are doing—or if you would not be willing and ready to return to it with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.... I have had no other thought in my mind and heart these eighteen years [since meeting Vivekananda] than Swamiji and what he stood for.

Joe loved Mayavati and the ideal of Advaita and visited the Advaita Ashrama, where she took long walks on the hillside. She was particularly interested in its publication work for the spread of the universal ideal of practical Advaita taught by Vivekananda.

She once wrote, 'It is not the length of days but the intensity with which we live them that cuts through Maya.' She liked a story that she had heard from Vivekananda which had a powerful influence on her life: Once there was a hunter who caught many pigeons and kept them trapped in a huge net.

When caught, the pigeons immediately began to try to squeeze their bodies through the holes in the net. But their bodies were so big that they could not get through. They gave themselves up to the hands of destiny. Every day the hunter came and fed the birds plentifully so that they would quickly become big and fat, and killing them, he would sell their meat. The pigeons would gobble up huge quantities of food. They did not know that the more they ate, the fatter they would become. Among them was a pigeon which abstained from eating and day by day began to grow thinner and thinner, and finally one day, passing through a hole in the net it escaped and flew away. And so Joe, who never wanted anything from anyone, and who lived frugally so that she would have more to give to others, was free.

Josephine MacLeod outlived her friend by nearly half a century, keeping his spirit alive for us. She passed away at the ripe age of 91 at the Vedanta Society in Hollywood, California, in October 1949. Nivedita had said about her, 'I see that you were, of all of us, that one who was most with Him and on equal terms; who saw Him most as He was.' At Ridgely, Vivekananda composed a poem for Joe, *To My Own Soul*, in which he wrote:

An age it seems since you and I began
our
March uphill or down. Sailing smooth
o'er
Seas that are so rare—
Thou nearer unto me, than oft-times I
myself—
Proclaiming mental moves before they
were!
Reflector true—Thy pulse so timed to
mine,
Thou perfect note of thoughts,
however fine—
Shall we now part, Recorder, say?
In thee is friendship.... □

Significance of the Durgā Pūjā

BR SASWATACHAITANYA

An excellent study of the origins of Mother worship and the significance of the Durgā Pūjā is presented by Brahmachari Saswatachaitanya. He resides at Belur Math.

Autumn is festival time in India. Along with Daśaharā and Dīpāvali, Durgā Pūjā (which is otherwise called Navarātri) is an important autumnal celebration. It is celebrated widely, though its popularity is maximum in eastern India. It is important not only for its social appeal but also for its deep spiritual significance.

The Philosophy of Mother Worship

Swami Vivekananda has succinctly summed up the entire philosophy of the Durgā Pūjā in this small paragraph on Mother worship:

Mother-worship is a distinct philosophy in itself. Power is the first of our ideas. It impinges upon man at every step; power felt within is the soul; without, nature. And the battle between the two makes human life. All that we know or feel is but the resultant of these two forces. Man saw that the sun shines on the good and evil alike. Here was a new idea of God, as the Universal Power behind all—the Mother-idea was born.¹

Three important ideas underlie this worship of Śakti as Mother Durgā:

(a) She symbolizes the source, the repository and the sum total of all power. From the crawling of amoebae to the swirling of galaxies in the external world, and from the day-dreams of a child to the highest intuitive insights of the sage in the mental sphere—all are

sustained by that one source of energy. So, a true worshipper must be able to consciously draw upon this energy source.

(b) This source of power does not discriminate between good and evil. Mother Durgā sustains those who follow her laws and crushes those who dare violate them.² Sri Ramakrishna, wishing to know the power of Mahāmāyā, saw her rise from the Ganga as an exceedingly beautiful expectant mother who delivered a beautiful infant, nurses it tenderly, and then assuming a frightful form proceeded to swallow it up.³ In other words, both the creative and the destructive elements in nature are dependent on this one source of power.

(c) Being inseparable from Brahman, the source of power is sentient and is especially manifest to the worshipper as the acme of the feminine principle—Mother. In the words of Swami Vivekananda: '...I cannot but believe that there is somewhere a great power that thinks of Herself as feminine, and called Kali and Mother.'⁴ She is the mother for she creates and protects, grants people's wishes and also chastises the delinquent.

Evolution of the Concept of Mother Durgā

The idea of the Mother Goddess is found developed even in the most ancient civilizations. The Mother Goddess seals of the Indus

1. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 8, p. 252. [Hereafter *Complete Works*.]

2. *Citte kṛpā samara-niṣṭhuratā ca drṣṭā tvayi-eva devī...* —*Devī Māhātmya*, 4.22.

3. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1978), p. 232.

4. *Complete Works*, Vol. 8, p. 264.

civilization and the goddesses Isis of Egypt, Inanna of Sumer, Harite of Gandhara and Kuan-yin of ancient China testify to this fact.

In India, the early *Ṛg-Vedic* goddess concepts of Aditi, Sarasvatī, Vāk, Pṛthvī, Uṣas and others are coalesced in the *Devī Sūkta* where Brahmavādinī Vāk realizes herself as the Universal Power.⁵ The goddess Durgā, identified with Agni, has an entire *sūkta* (the *Durgā Sūkta*) dedicated to her in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (10.2). The *Kena Upaniṣad* (3.25) describes Umā Haimavatī, daughter of Himavān, bedecked with gold. Umā's attainment of Śiva through *tapas* is described in Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*.⁶ In the *Mahābhārata* Durgā is Vindhyavāsini whilst in the *Devī Māhātmya* her popularly worshipped forms of Mahiṣāsura-mardini (the slayer of the demon Mahiṣāsura who took the form of a buffalo or *mahiṣa*) and Cāmuṇḍā (who vanquished Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa in battle) are found developed. The *Devī Māhātmya* (4-11) also emphasizes her identity with the goddesses Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī. Umā's children Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya⁷ (popular as Kumāra or Subrahmaṇya in southern India) complete the family of deities worshipped at the Pūjā.

The popular form of Mahiṣāsura-mardini-Durgā has ten arms (which wield different weapons), is astride a lion and is seen piercing the demon Mahiṣa (emerging from a buffalo) with a trident. Variations of this image are noted in the numerous sculptures made from the 1st century BCE onwards and found in different parts of India. A study of this has been made by Bimal Chandra Datta in his Bengali work *Śe-kāl theke E-kāl*.

The *Mahābhārata*, the *Kālikā Purāṇa*, and the *Devī Bhāgavata* mention Śrī Rāmacandra's

worship of Mother Durgā prior to his war with Rāvaṇa. As this was performed in autumn (unlike the then usual worship time of spring), when the sun is in its southerly course and the gods are asleep, he had to perform a special 'awakening ceremony', the *bodhana*, which is continued to date.

The Rituals of the Durgā Pūjā

The construction of the clay image used for worship is begun on Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī, the day Devī was born to Yaśodā, Kṛṣṇa's foster-mother. The actual worship is held during the bright lunar fortnight of the month of Āśvina (usually October) when the sun is in the Virgo zodiac. The worship could begin on seven different days (the *kalpārambha tithis*) of which the sixth lunar day (the *ṣaṣṭhī tithi*) is the commonest day of commencement.

The worship is begun with the establishment of a specially designed and decorated jar (the *ghaṭa*) on a specified altar. The deity is then ritually 'awakened' (the *bodhana*) and 'invited' to appear first in a *bilva* tree and subsequently in the image (the *āmantraṇa*) with offerings of various articles (of both decoration and food). Next, she is formally invoked in the image (the *prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā*) which is worshipped on each of the following three days with detailed offerings to Devī and her associated deities and their mounts. The use of a variety of articles, from gold to cowdung, symbolizes her universal presence.

The deity is also given a very elaborate bath (the *mahāsnāna*, performed using a mirror so positioned as to reflect the image). Water collected from rivers all over India, various juices and other liquids as well as soil obtained from a variety of places are used for this purpose. This is symbolic of the unity of the land.

5. *Ṛg Veda*, 10.10.125.

6. Cf. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 1.35.19.

7. See *Śiva Purāṇa* for the birth episodes of Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya.

A sheaf of nine shoots (the *navapatrikā*, representing Devī's manifestation in the plant kingdom)⁸ is kept beside the image and

elaborately worshipped on the *saptamī tithi*.

The Divine Mother's presence in all women is acknowledged through the *kumārī pūjā* (commonly performed on the *aṣṭamī tithi*) when a virgin girl (the *kumārī*) between one and sixteen years of age is worshipped.

At the 48-minute-long junction of the *aṣṭamī* and *navamī tithis*, Devī is worshipped in her terrible aspect of Cāmuṇḍā, the scourge of the demons. This worship is known as the *sandhi pūjā*. On the *navamī tithi* the worshipper surrenders himself to Devī through a symbolic sacrificial cutting of pumpkins, sugarcane, bananas, etc (the *balidāna*) and performs *homa* (a ritual coming down from Vedic times) with offerings in a fire representing Durgā. The *pūjā* concludes on the *daśamī tithi* with the immersion of the image in a river symbolizing Devī's reversion to her elemental form, her spirit being enshrined in the heart of the worshipper. The devotees then exchange greetings, embraces and sweets thus reknitting human ties.

The entire ritual is replete with symbolism and is accompanied by devotional singing (including the special 'welcome songs' called *āgamani*), chanting of the *Devī Māhātmya* and various Vedic texts, daily elaborate *ārati* in the evenings, offerings by devotees and distribution of *prasāda*. All this creates a very fervent and joyous atmosphere and the devotees are imbued with a feeling of the intimate presence of the Divine Mother.

Durgā Pūjā in the Ramakrishna Order

Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master and The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna record Sri Ramakrishna's enthusiastic participation in the Durgā Pūjā. We find him serving Mother as a lady-companion (*sakhi*), completely identi-

fied with the womenfolk of Mathuranath Biswas's household, visiting the Pūjā at his nephew Hriday's house in a subtle body (from Calcutta) and seeing and blessing from his sick-bed the worship of a lay devotee, Surendranath Mitra, whose devotional fervour had made the image come to life, as it were.

After Sri Ramakrishna's passing away the Pūjā used to be performed at the Baranagore Math using a *ghaṭa*.⁹ In 1901 Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda had visions of the Divine Mother's coming to Belur Math and promptly proceeded to worship her in an image in the presence of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. Between 1902 and 1911 worship was again performed over a *ghaṭa*. Worship in an image was resumed in 1912,¹⁰ and presently continues to be performed every year at the Math temple.

Spiritual Significance of the Durgā Pūjā

The entire Durgā Pūjā is symbolic of a grand philosophy which must be incorporated into one's daily life for it to yield proper results. Thus, only the dedicated and energetic (symbolized by Devī's mount, the lion) are likely to succeed at work or be able to control their animal propensities (symbolized by the demon Mahiṣāsura), by Mother's grace. Nor is the worship of the Divine Mother in the *navapatikā* likely to produce greater agricultural yield unless concentrated and scientific efforts accompany it in the fields.¹¹ In fact, all the accessory *pūjā*-rituals

8. *Kadalī dāḍimī dhānyam haridrā mārakam kacuḥ; Bilvo'soko jayanti ca vijñeyā navapatikāḥ.*

—Tithi-tattwa.

9. *For Seekers of God*, trans. Swami Vividishananda and Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985), p. 129.

10. Swami Vimalatmananda, 'First Durgā Pūjā at Belur Math' in *The Vedanta Kesari*, October 1989, p. 391.

11. See Swami Saradananda, *Bhārate Śaktipūjā* (Bengali), (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1386 B.Y.), Chapter 1.

aim at concentrating the mind and avoiding distractions. Again, sacrifice of narrow interests (ie *balidāna*) as well as co-operative effort are essential for any big work. This is emphasized in the legend of Devī's manifestation through the collective effort of the *devas*¹² as well as in the organized effort needed to conduct the big Durgā Pūjā.

The *kumārī pūjā* is considered successful only if it inspires men to view and honour all women as manifestations of the Divine Mother, helps all women to evince that power and dignity associated with the Divine Mother and ultimately leads all to realize their own divinity, for the Atman has no distinctions of sex, and divine motherhood is inherent in all beings: 'Yā devī sarva-bhūteṣu mātṛ-rūpeṇa samsthitā, That Devī who is present as Mother in all beings...', says the *Devī Māhātmya*.

Explaining the meaning of the Jagaddhātṛī form (which is a related aspect of the Divine Mother) Sri Ramakrishna says, 'The Divine Mother, Jagaddhātṛī, reveals Herself in the heart of one who can control the mind, which may be compared to an elephant.'¹³ The mind is indeed difficult to control and hence Mother Durgā is said to be difficult of access (*duḥkhena gantum śakyate*). But the perseverent and sincere seeker realizes her in his heart; and with Mother Durgā established in the heart, wealth and learning (ie Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī), strength and success (ie Kārtikeya and Gaṇeśa) are bound to follow, for she, as Universal Power, is the key to both worldly success and liberation. □

12. *Devī Māhātmya*, Chapter 2.

13. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1989), p. 270.

Swamiji Tells Stories

At the Alameda Home of Truth in April 1900, Swamiji told these stories to Mrs Hansbrough and others: The first was a story of an old water demon 'who lived in a pool. She had long hair, which was capable of infinite extension. When people would come to bathe in the pool, sometimes she would devour them if she were hungry. With others, however, she would twine a hair around one of their toes. When they went home, the hair, invisible, would just stretch and stretch; and when the old demon became hungry she would just start pulling on the hair until the victim came back to the pool once more, to be eaten up.' Swamiji added that Mrs Hansbrough had bathed in the pool where Divine Mother dwells. 'Go back home if you wish; but Her hair is twined round your toe and you will have to come back to the pool in the end!'

The second story was about himself. It was those first of his American days when he was living under distressing circumstances. He said that his feet were hurt from wearing shoes when he first came to Chicago in 1893 and that he was taken to 'a lady toe-doctor,' who made matters worse. 'Oh, my toe, my toe!' Swamiji cried while narrating the incident. He added, 'Whenever I think of that lady toe-doctor my toe hurts!' The writer comments that we should read this incident keeping in view Swamiji's position during those days: 'He had been virtually alone, too late to register as a delegate to the Parliament of Religions, without visible prospects for the future, hooted at in the streets for his strange clothes. And as if this were not enough, he had been tormented by ill-fitting shoes and tortured by an inept lady toe-doctor!'

—retold from *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*

Durga Puja at Ramakrishna Mission, Mauritius

DR ALAN HUNTER

Dr Alan Hunter, from London, participated in the Durga Puja celebrations at the Ramakrishna Mission, Mauritius, last year. Here are his observations.

Mauritius is a small, independent republic, an island state in the Indian Ocean, lying between Madagascar and Indian peninsula. It has a population of about a million, over half of which is ethnically Indian, predominantly Hindu. Of the rest of the population, the majority are of African descent, and a smaller number are Chinese, Europeans, and others. Most are descended from nineteenth-century immigrants who were brought to the island to work as bonded labourers in the sugar fields.

The main sectors of the economy today are sugar plantations, tourism, and textiles. Mauritius has experienced rapid economic growth in the past decade, and a number of large towns on the central plateau are now very busy with a constant stream of traffic, new buildings, factories, and so on. Impressions as one walks the streets are similar to those of more affluent parts of India, Bangalore perhaps. The different ethnic groups work together and use a common language, Creole, which is a mixture of French and African languages. However, they tend to be separate socially, and each keeps to its own traditions in many aspects of life. The Africans are mostly Christians, and churches are strong on the island. As far as we have seen, no people of African descent attend the Ramakrishna Mission, and in general they do not express much interest in Hinduism. Recently a number of Hindus were exposed to persistent Christian evangelism and became somewhat confused. Relations between ethnic groups is a sensitive and important issue in this multi-cultural society.

There has been a steady revival in Hindu traditions among the Indian community in recent years, and also a similar phenomenon among the Chinese. There are Indian cultural activities, music, dance, art, and so on, and various Hindu religious groups and temples. All communities on the island support an active religious life. Maybe one reason for this positive attitude towards tradition is that many Mauritians have worked overseas, usually in the UK or France, or have relatives there, and they are aware of the contrast between the island way of life and that of the industrial societies. Still, Mauritius is changing fast and within another twenty years it may become even more busy and commercialized.

The Ramakrishna Mission in Mauritius was established by Swami Ghanananda about fifty years ago [in 1941]. The main temple is located near the top of a small hill in Vacoas, a busy residential area on the central plateau, in a compound of about six acres. Until some ten years ago the ground was wild and overgrown; some devotees even felt a little unsafe there since young men from the neighbourhood would use it as a recreation area. The present Swami in charge of the Mission, Swami Krishnarupananda, with the help of devotees, has transformed it into a serene, orderly, and beautiful place. There are several buildings: a temple, an administration and residential block, a library, outdoor kitchen facilities and a newly completed auditorium/guest-house. The front part of the *ashram* has lawns with trees and flower-beds, and the rear part has more trees and a large

vegetable plot. There are good parking facilities, even for the hundreds of visitors to the Pujas, important because there is no safe parking outside. A project now nearing completion is the construction of a tall perimeter wall. So the physical environment matches the spiritual aspiration. This transformation required a huge amount of hard work, which was to a great extent carried out by devotees themselves on a voluntary basis. There are a few dozen devotees who come to the Mission regularly, and they are organized into work-teams on Sundays, using their practical skills in matters like gardening and building.

The Mission also runs a pre-primary school and shrine-room in a village some miles away, where land had been donated to the Mission in Swami Ghanananda's time. Income from this land still supports the Mission's work, which is otherwise reliant on donations.

Swami Krishnarupananda and two brahmacharis, young men from Mauritius, conduct morning and evening sessions of meditation, *bhajans*, *puja*, and *arati* daily. These sessions are attended by a small number of devotees, usually fewer than ten except on Thursday and Sunday, when larger numbers attend for *satsang*. Most devotees have family and work responsibilities, and many of them live miles away from the Mission; some live too far away from Vacoas to attend except on occasional festival days. Many or most of the devotees are well-educated and from professional backgrounds, and there are approximately equal numbers of men and women, many of them married couples. The Mission has created an excellent reputation on the island and is well respected at all levels.

The Durga Puja is by far the biggest event in the Mission's calendar, and it is a great manifestation of the Mission's potential. Expecting between 1200-1600 attenders each

day for ten days, the devotees and Swamiji were extraordinarily busy beforehand setting up tarpaulins, organising supplies, cleaning, and so on. People poured in throughout the week. Apart from the religious services in the temple, the Mission offers rather substantial banana leaf meals, free of charge, twice a day, as well as *prasad* packets. All preparation, cooking, serving, and cleaning is done by women volunteers. Men serve the men's meals, and also take care of car parking, a book stall, security, and other tasks. The devotees work so much that many of them hardly see a single *puja*—something they regard as part of their service.

The Pujas were moving and magnificent the previous year (1998) when I participated. The day started with an early morning meditation and *bhajans* for devotees, and most days there were two main *pujas*, morning and evening. After the invocations and worship, the entire congregation heard a talk by Swamiji (in Hindi), and joined in *bhajans*, which were sung very enthusiastically. The temple was packed to capacity, with overflow crowds under tarpaulins outside, or looking in through the windows. A more intimate moment was the *sandhi puja* conducted at 3:23 am and attended by a hundred or so of the regular devotees, with a very intense atmosphere. As the Swami said, we felt the Divine Mother very close on that occasion.

Proceedings in the week focused on an image made by a local artist. On Saturday a long procession of eight buses and dozens of cars went down to the seaside some fifteen miles from the *ashram*. There was a short *bhajans*-and-prayer meeting on the beach, and the image was immersed from a small boat. The next day or two were spent in a clean-up operation after the festivities.

One of the interesting aspects of all this was the great respect and large attendance of the public for the Durga Puja, compared to the

quieter life of the Mission at other times. Apparently the attendance for Durga Puja has been growing every year, and it is now very widely known across the island; only one or two other Hindu centres seem to celebrate it, and on a smaller scale. For the morning sessions, attenders are nearly all women, men being at work, and it was quite moving seeing Mother worshipped by some five or six hundred women, and perhaps a dozen men! In the evening, the gender ratio is more balanced. The social composition appeared quite mixed. Some attenders are elderly, perhaps poor, people with little education, while others are middle-class professionals. But sincerity and profound devotion were obvious across the spectrum.

Another important development of the last ten years has been the sense of decorum and discipline within the temple and its activities. This may have needed some attention, since Mauritians are generally a rather happy-go-lucky and relaxed kind of people who enjoy chatting, socializing and so on. The atmosphere now is such that people avoid worldly conversation and focus on the spiritual purpose. Also, there is no pushing or shoving, no problems even with large crowds. The separation between men and women for work-tasks, seating arrangements, canteens, etc is quite strict, certainly much more than one would find in the West.

Overall, there was a real sense of joy and community participation in the whole event. Swami Krishnarupananda emphasized in his talks that although the *pujaris* play the important ritual role, they are really acting on behalf of the whole congregation present, and that everybody should feel spiritually and personally involved with the proceedings. Indeed one of the best aspects was that it seemed as though the whole group was focused and participated fully even during the recitation of long Sanskrit *mantras*, and they joined in with great devotion for *bhajans* and prayers.

The community created such joy and devotion for the Puja, but the following week attendance at the *ashram* was down to the usual handful of devotees: as though people do not realize that they can find joy in the Ramakrishna Mission at any time of year! The Swami said that it was always like this, and he sees the Mission's duty as to strengthen people and cater to their needs, at whatever level they find themselves. So if they need an orthodox Puja for devotion to Mother, the Mission should provide it; if they ever want to proceed to a more philosophical approach, the Mission provides that as well.

Compared to India or Europe, life in Mauritius has been relatively uneventful in the past decades: the political system has been stable, and the economy has progressed quite successfully. It is interesting to see how the Ramakrishna Mission has put down roots on the island. It remains small in membership, despite a comparative boom in several other religious organizations. Many of the regular devotees are from a small number of extended families who have been intimately associated with the Mission since the days of Swami Ghanananda. Yet its influence is quite significant in other ways. Ramakrishna Vedanta literature is widely distributed, partly through a well-attended annual book fair held at the Mission. There are a few thousand participants at the Durga Puja, and smaller numbers for other events. Probably most important, there is a core group of devotees many of whom have been attending for years or even decades. There is a quiet, intense, spiritual atmosphere, a real sense of reverence for Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda. It is a peaceful place. Our contemporary world provides many opportunities for grand displays, of religious or material goods. Judging from the experience of Mauritius, Sri Ramakrishna seems to prefer to work behind the scenes. □

Sister Nivedita's Unpublished Letter to Sri Ramananda Chatterji

May 10, 1910

Dear Ramananda Babu,

I have written a paper on *The Theory of Greek Influence on Indian Art*¹ under the 'Ancient Abbey of Ajanta' series, which has turned into 3 (three)! They will be published in June, July, and August, I suppose, of the 'Ancient Abbey of Ajanta' series—numbers 4,5, and 6.²

Your manager has very stupidly transposed the letter press of the many illustrations—so I send *you* the papers and list, asking *you* to give orders for proof. My manuscript is disgraceful. It kept growing. But I leave on Friday night. I can do no more. Expect to be back for July.

I am sorry I was of so little use to you about the notes last November. We are fallen indeed on Evil times—and *you* may delete my work—but I could not permit that right to anyone else! I am sure you understand.

I am going to suggest that you should consign to my keeping the blocks that illustrate my article on these historical subjects. My friend Mr. Parker of the Empress told me once that his blocks of photograph had accumulated confusion through 30 years, and he could now find nothing! But if I kept them they would be no less available to you, and I could always lay my hands on them!

It is only Paper I of these 3—Chapter 11 of Ajanta—that will (be) printed in my absence, I think. I do trust you are better. It feels dreadful to have you away! One wants your judgement all the time!

Yours ever
Nivedita

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1. Our readers should be acquainted with the following two observations made by Sister Nivedita:
(a) She wrote on 5 May 1910, 'So, far from the Indians having learnt sculpture from the Greeks, they very clearly evolved their own in the northwest colonies of Bengal, at Bodh Gaya and Benares. And I am able to *prove prove prove* it up to the hilt. Just think of it!

'Mr. Havell has made a vague suggestion. But I am giving clear and distinct facts, one upon another. I read my paper last night to the B [Dr. J.C. Bose] showing him the illustrations, and he was quite satisfied.' (*Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 2, p. 1097)

- (b) She wrote to Mrs Ole Bull on 12 May 1910, 'Do you read the Modern Review? I have just written a wonderful series of papers on the new Greek Theory of Indian Sculpture. Swamiji's wild extravagance about the debt of Europe to India in Art is now, I think fully justified!'
2. Sister Nivedita's serial on 'Ancient Abbey of Ajanta' was published in the *Modern Review* in its February and March, and May through August numbers in 1910. The last three instalments were on 'The Theory of Greek Influence on Indian Art'.

A Call to Indian Youth

DR ANIL BARAN RAY

Is politics bad? What is true politics? A professor of political science at Burdwan University, Dr Ray envisages a holistic approach to politics as an answer to national decadence.

If you ask about the basic problem of governance in India today, probably nine out of ten would answer that it is corruption. And if they are asked about the source of such corruption, they would point towards politics as the single most important corruptor of the nation. Such an answer would remind the readers of the famous saying of Jonathan Swift that 'Politics, as the word is commonly understood, are nothing but corruptions.'

Corruption arises from the struggle for power with which politics is associated. As far as such struggle is an honest instrument for capturing state power through ballot rather than bullet, it is perfectly acceptable. But when the 'struggle' throws all morals to the winds and seeks to capture state power by *any* means ranging from the use of muscle to the rigging of elections, it becomes corrupt to the extreme. Those who capture power by crooked means will no doubt use it subsequently for wicked ends such as self-promotion or at best promotion of their group, clan or community. It is owing to such perverted use that politics, in popular perception, has become indistinguishable from corruption these days.

Corruption¹ is not the soul of proper politics. The ancient Greeks from whom we derived the words 'politics' and 'political' always distinguished between 'politics proper' and 'politics perverted or corrupted'. 'Politics proper' for Aristotle, for example, meant acting in the interest of the whole and 'politics perverted' meant to him acting in narrow,

selfish interests. Plato, Aristotle's teacher, conceived an even higher end of politics. Conceiving that politics was synonymous with selfishness, he reasoned that only those people were fit for the governance of the state who, being purged of all sources of self-interest such as family and property of their own, could pursue selflessly and single-mindedly the larger interests of the people as a whole to the total exclusion of all parochial and sectarian interests. Thus approached, politics to Plato was nothing but spirituality in the sense of calling out the best in the individual.

Spirituality is far, far beyond all corruption. So long as man thinks he is a mere body-mind complex, he is given to seeking physical comforts as well as wealth and power for self-aggrandizement. It is his craving for more and more of these things that inevitably brings in its wake corruptibility. However, it is only the limitation of his knowledge that makes a person think that he is merely a physical being. Being a spark of the Divine, it is the bounden duty of man to rise above the temporal and ephemeral goals of existence and to strive for the realization of the Eternal in him.

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1. Even the much-maligned Machiavelli did not say that the king could be personally corrupt. He only defended the king's right to be prudent and amoral in the interest of the state. He was, however, conscious of the distinction between private morality and public morality and never said that immorality committed in selfish or private interest was defensible.

Now, what has this to do with politics? The purpose of political life cannot be separate or divorced from the purpose of life itself.² As such it is the obligation of politicians to always keep in view the two dicta of the supreme law of life: righteousness and renunciation. The first ordains that all goals of life, political or otherwise, are to be pursued with righteousness, because by unrighteousness man prospers in the short run but perishes at the root in the long run. Our scriptures say:

*Adharmenaidhate tāvat
tato bhadraṇi paśyati;
Tataḥ sapatnam jayati
samūlastu vinaśyati.*

By unrighteousness a person prospers, gains what seems desirable, and defeats enemies, but perishes at the root.

The second dictum enjoins the individual to temper his enjoyment of all worldly things with renunciation. '*Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā*' says the *Īśa Upaniṣad*. Without renunciation nothing great can be accomplished in life. So far as politics is concerned, renunciation means not self-serving, not self-aggrandizement, not the clannish pursuit of group or factional interests, not power for one's own sake, but power to serve the people for their welfare. The ideal is service of the masses. Politics, so to say, should be goodness itself. Renunciation fortified with a sense of righteousness and service inspired by a selfless motive should be the two vehicles for realizing such goodness. 'The national ideals of India are renunciation and service,' proclaimed Swami Vivekananda with all his heart. 'Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.'³

One may ask: Since renunciation and

service also constituted for Swami Vivekananda the essence of religion, will it not make politics indistinguishable from religion and thereby hurt the spirit of secularism which we have adhered to in independent India? Religion, when properly understood, is not a hindrance but help to politics. All life, including the political, being meant for the realization of the higher Self in us, and religion, properly understood, being the prop for such realization, no field of activity in life can be immune from religion. If, as the *Īśa Upaniṣad* posits it, 'God pervades all that moves in the universe,' then how can there be a distinction between life or activity that is religious and life or activity that is secular? If one has to be true to one's being, and if that is the *dharma* or supreme law of one's life, then politics as also other fields of activity in life, as Mahatma Gandhi firmly put it, 'have to be manifestations of *satya*.' According to Gandhiji, a person who aspires after seeing face to face 'the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth...cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.'⁴

Religion means nothing more and nothing less than being true to the Self. It provides the foundation as much to political life as to others. Religion in the sense of being one with the Spirit is spirituality pure and simple, which in turn is the very antithesis of corruptibility that springs from the individual's craving for satisfying his lower physical self. Corruption brings man *satisfaction* in the short run. Religion or spirituality brings man *fulfilment* of life which in turn confers on him perfect joy or bliss. If, instead of emphasizing the distinction between things religious and

2. Even a Western writer like C.L. Wayper acknowledges this. See his *Political Thought* (London: English Universities Press, 1967), p. vii.

3. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 5, p. 228. [Hereafter *Complete Works*.]

4. M.K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1958).

things secular, we had learnt the value of religion, then our society and polity would not have been subject to so much corruption as it is today. Finding Indian society in a mess, Swami Vivekananda pointed out long ago that 'this state of society exists not on account of religion but because religion has not been applied to society as it should have been.'⁵

It is never too late to listen to the words of Swami Vivekananda. The time has come to teach our youths that politics is not something bad, something that corrupt or corruptible persons in the garb of politicians take to. If the youth of today despair about the present state of politics, it is because they have tucked away somewhere inside them a sense of eternity which makes them most receptive to the lesson, given in earnestness, that politics is a 'calling which beckons man to unfold his eternal and infinite self on the temporal and finite plane of thought and action,'⁶ that politics too, taking the form of renunciation, love and

service to the country, as also the pursuit of Truth, contributes to the fulfilment of life.

A spirited, spiritual approach to life and living, as also to politics, should be the motto of the young people of India. They must believe in the Self, and being fortified with this they should work to raise the nation. As Swami Vivekananda with his unshakable faith in the youth of India used to say, they are the ones who are most spontaneously motivated to make sacrifices and as such the deliverance of India lies in their hands.

Indeed a spiritual reorientation of India's political life,⁷ actualized through the youth of India, would save India not only from the decadence in which it finds itself today, but would also pave the way towards its resurgence as a nation which would help its population eventually achieve what Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo called a life of fullness, equality and unity. □

5. *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 47-48.

6. See Michael Oakeshott, *Political Education* (1951) and *Rationalism in Politics* (1962).

7. Swami Vivekananda put it in the following words: '...politics has to be preached by showing how much it will improve the one thing that the nation wants—its spirituality. ... So every improvement in India requires first of all an upheaval in religion. Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas.' [*Complete Works*, Vol. 3, p. 221.]

And Sri Aurobindo, in building on Swamiji's ideas, meant by a spiritual reorientation of India's political life the following: 'Our leaders and our followers both require a deeper

sadhana, a more direct communion with the Divine Guru and Captain of our movement, an inward uplifting, a grander and more impetuous force behind thought and deed. ... It is the spirituality of India, the sadhana of India, *tapasya*, *jnanam*, *sakti* that must make us free and great. ... It is the East that must conquer in India's uprising. It is the Yogin who must stand behind the political leader or manifest within him; Ramdas must be born in one body with Shivaji, Mazzini mingle with Cavour. The divorce of intellect and spirit, strength and purity may help a European revolution, but by a European strength we shall not conquer.' [*The Ideal of a Karmayogin*, pp. 17-18.]

I am persuaded that a leader is not made in one life. He has to be born for it.

—Swami Vivekananda

RELIGION AND LIFE



Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

Does systematic practice mean regular prayer?

Systematic practice means the cultivation of one particular attitude—disciplining oneself to the Divine. Regular prayer will also help a lot. There is prayer, there is contemplation, there is leading a strictly moral life following higher ideals—all these and many more such are avenues of systematic practice.

What is prāṇāyāma? Is its practice necessary?

Prāṇāyāma means controlling the *prāṇa* or life force. This is not recommended for all because practising *prāṇāyāma* without proper guidance may cause respiratory troubles.

Maharaj, how to quieten the restless mind?

Perform japa and meditation, pray earnestly, read proper books—and the mind will slowly come under control. Read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* regularly and also books by and on the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Fix your mind on Him by whatever means possible and only then will the mind become obedient. For a long time it has been provided with unholy thoughts; fill it with good thoughts now.

*Cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa
pramāthi balavad-dṛḍham;*

*Tasyāhaṁ nigrahaṁ manye
vāyoriva suduṣkaram. [—Gītā 6.34]*

This is Arjuna, the great warrior's lamentation: he says that the mind is difficult to control. It is as difficult, he adds, as controlling the wind. Krishna shows him two ways of steadying the mind: one is *abhyāsa-yoga* and

the other is *vairāgya*. *Abhyāsa-yoga* is consistent practice. The endeavour should be sustained and prolonged. Why should we struggle continuously, for a long time?

Asaṁyatātmanā yogo

duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ;

Vaśyātmanā tu yatatā

śakyo'vāptum-upāyataḥ. [—Gītā, 6.36]

Atha cittam samādhātum

na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram;

Abhyāsa-yogena tato

māmicchāptum dhanañjaya. [—Gītā, 12.9]

The second method is *vairāgya*, that is, apathy towards worldly objects and interests. If attachment to worldly possessions makes the mind restless, it should be educated that worldly things are merely illusions and transient. If the mind is inclined towards these things, it cannot be directed towards God. To take the mind away from worldly attachments through such processes of discrimination is known as *vairāgya*.

Maharaj, what is a mantra? What is the importance of spiritual initiation (mantra-dīkṣā)?

'*Mananāt trāyate iti mantraḥ*, that which liberates by its very repetition is a mantra.' A mantra signifies a particular name of God. It consists of God's various names and also certain mystic syllables. There are various mantras of varying lengths and metres. Again, there are very simple mantras also. These mantras have been handed down by tradition, through a chain of teacher-disciple relationship. It is not that a mantra has to be in Sanskrit alone, or in any other specific language alone. God has several thousands of

names, and the *nāma* and the *nāmī*, the name and the Named, are non-different. They are one and the same. A mantra is not just a particular combination of certain words; it is a means to remember God, and through such remembrance, reach Him. Attached to almost every mantra are certain sacred syllables like *hrīm*, *klīm*, etc. These are called *bīja mantras*. These are also handed down through a succession of gurus and disciples. The spiritual power possessed by the guru is passed on to the disciple through the medium of mantras at the time of initiation (*mantra dīkṣā*). When the disciple repeats the mantra with a pure mind and with intense concentration, he is infused with the spiritual power possessed by the guru. This helps continuation of the lineage of the guru (*guru-paramparā*). The mind gets purified through japa and concentration deepens, and this apparently simple mantra has the power to take the devotee to the feet of God. However, to fully comprehend the significance of the mantra, you must lead an absolutely pure life—devoted to God alone. There are certain things which cannot be understood intellectually. Sri Chaitanya said:

*Nāmnāmakāri bahuḍhā nija-sarva-śaktiḥ
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇena kālāḥ;
Etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam-īdṛśam-ihājani nānurāgaḥ.*

‘O God! You have created many names for Yourself with infinite power immanent in each. There is no fixed time schedule to repeat Your names. However, it is my great misfortune that affinity towards Your names is not growing within me.’ This verse Chaitanya recited ruefully. You may wonder at his despair for not having grown affinity or love towards God, when in reality he was a totally God-intoxicated soul. The meaning of this is, though he was always immersed in God, even that was not sufficient for him; even this yearning was not to his heart’s content.

The name of God is His verbal form (*svarūpa*). Having been initiated with a man-

tra, countless sadhakas have attained spiritual glory by repeating God’s names with devotion and perseverance. Therefore, he who receives *mantra dīkṣā* with a pure heart, sufficient preparedness, and a right attitude will attain salvation. This salvation comes owing to the virtue of the name of God. For this to happen, your life must be transmuted into the mantra: you should become a personification of the mantra itself. Empty utterances without any feeling or concentration will not serve the purpose. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that some individuals who perform japa so many times, consider themselves sinners all the same. Such people, he would add, have no faith. Just utter the name of God once, but with all faith, and you can free yourself from bondage. Along with repetition of God’s name, your life must be pure and clean. God’s nature is revealed through such a person alone who maintains absolute purity of thought and action. No profanity can and should creep into such a person.

A true guru initiates disciples by whispering mantras into their ears; he also initiates by inspiring the disciple’s mind, they say. How to understand the latter?

Yes, the spiritual teacher can inspire that way. However, in some minds its effect is felt and in some others it is not. Only if your mind is pure can you understand this.

What is the necessity of taking dīkṣā?

People consult physicians when they are ill; similarly to proceed along the right spiritual path, guidance from the guru is necessary.

Maharaj, how to purify the mind?

The mind can be purified through spiritual practice—japa, prayer, meditation, selfless service, keeping holy company, reading good books, and so on.

—Compiled by Smt Manju Nandi Mazumdar

Educational Values in the Vedic Age

DR SUCHITRA MITRA

A senior lecturer in Sanskrit at Allahabad University, Dr Mitra discusses the importance of values in Vedic education.

Since ancient times, India has given utmost importance to education and learning. The oldest records, the Vedas, are the storehouse of knowledge and Vedic studies formed an imperative necessity for any student. Vedas not only teach secular knowledge but also spiritual truths. They lead us to the supreme Truth. Vedas maintain that the development of culture takes place through the spread of education and through learning from experience. Through education we can eradicate rigidity and aggressiveness, and develop the values of tolerance, peace and gentleness. The Vedic concept of education is fundamentally this: leading the student from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. This knowledge is called *vidyā*. Knowledge transforms, reshapes and renews our being. Śaṅkara gives the meaning of *vidyā* to be *devatājñāna*, and the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* indicates that this knowledge is itself Brahman. This Upaniṣad says (1.2.13) that teachers imparted the science of Brahman—the science by which one knows the true, imperishable Being—to seekers whose minds were tranquil and senses controlled.

It is interesting to note that after some preliminary instructions, the first lesson which was taught was about how to control the mind. Having known the secret of controlling the mind and how to concentrate it, the student would grow stronger in faith and become capable of understanding higher truths. The student would recite this vow from the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* every day: 'May my speech rest in mind; may my mind rest in speech. O self-manifest Brahman, reveal

Yourself to me.'¹ Thus the fundamental principle behind learning was control of the mind, according to Vedic sages. Why should the mind be controlled? It is because the mind is the instrument which helps in gaining both ordinary as well as special knowledge. Therefore the Vedic seers wanted their minds to be of auspicious resolution. They would pray, 'May my mind be full of auspicious resolutions.'² The Vedic seers taught their disciples that the mind should be strong, dispassionate, and full of sublime thoughts so that they may enter the abode of peace and holiness. In this context, Swami Vivekananda's words, that if he were to begin learning again he would first learn concentrating the mind, become relevant.

The knowledge of continence, purity and self-control which was imparted by teachers to their pupils was called special knowledge. Chastity in thought, word and deed helps in developing vigour, virtue and knowledge, they taught. This period of learning is hence called the period of *brahmacarya*. During this period, the disciple begged food for his teacher and served him in various ways. The ideal of service to the guru is thus as old as civilization itself. Several restrictions were imposed upon the student during this stage of life. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* describes them as follows: the student should sit straight, should not be covered with too much

1. *Vāṁme manasi pratiṣṭhitā mano me vāci pratiṣṭhitam.* —*Aitareya Upaniṣad*, 1.

2. *Tanne manaḥ śivasāṅkalpamastu.* —*Yajur Veda*, 34.1.

clothing, should study in an empty stomach, and so on. The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* says that the disciple should avoid dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, and the use of perfumes, garlands, shoes, etc.³ Students paid respects to their teachers by touching their feet. The teacher instructed his students to always speak the truth and obey the laws of *dharma*. That apart, students were also told to keep up the study habit (*svādhyāya*), instruct others, serve the gods and manes and so on. During the Vedic period, students learnt from their teacher according to rule the lessons of consecration (*dīkṣā*) and austerity (*tapas*). Here austerity means observance of rules of discipleship, or the threefold austerity of the body, mind and speech. By consecration is meant the vow of celibacy, which includes absolute purity, continence and self-control.

Even with regard to secular, general knowledge (*cetaḥ*) also, we find it said that it can be attained by study and cultivation of certain positive attitudes like love, service, and so on. Teachers inspired their students in such a way that through such study, they could realize the truth of the unity behind the apparent diversity. One could become a student with a mere verbal agreement—sometimes for a whole lifetime. It was due to a long life of devotion that students never left their teacher's residence but continued their mission of learning. The disciple was called an *anusiṣṭa* when he completed education. Such learning would not only help students gather knowledge, they would also be preservers of knowledge to help posterity. How have the Vedas come down to us? It is only owing to

the hard labours of such students and teachers. The guru-disciple lineage was so strong that even without books, the Vedas were handed down from generation to generation, for thousands of years, by word of mouth—and not a single letter would be missed! The ritual chanting of the Vedas and their intonations are all so meaningful. Contrast this situation with present-day learning!

Thus knowledge comes from deep devotion to higher ideals, irrevocable determination to give up lust, anger, etc for attaining the higher goals of life, and through service and obedience to the preceptor. Knowledge is therefore the main theme of the Vedas. 'Veda' itself means knowledge. Proper study of the Vedas is a must for progress along the path of knowledge. Reciting the Vedas correctly and knowing their intrinsic meaning will lead to profound religious merit and the highest spiritual efficacy. The Vedas contain both paths: that of mundane good as well as spiritual good. The latter can be achieved only by leading a life of total renunciation and self-discipline. This is because the Vedas assert that unless one withdraws oneself from the allurements of the world and turns his vision inward, one cannot attain higher knowledge. The Upaniṣads too say repeatedly that of the several fields of knowledge, only that which leads to the supreme Truth alone is real knowledge (*parā vidyā*). In the *Śivopaniṣad* it is said: 'A sage who has taken bath in the pure water of knowledge is always free from impurities and is pure like the rays of the sun.'⁴ Let us all endeavour to gain this knowledge alone. □

3. *Nopariśāyī (brahmacārī) syānna gāyano na nartano na sārāṇo na niṣṭhivet.* —*Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*, 1.2.7.

4. *Jñānāmālāmbhasā snātaḥ sarvadaiva munīḥ śuciḥ; Nirmalas-suviśuddhaśca vigñeyah sūrya-raśmivat.* —*Śivopaniṣad*, 5.41.

The highest truth is always the simplest.

—Swami Vivekananda

The Way to Peace and Blessedness

SWAMI SATYAPRIYANANDA

The former editor of Prabuddha Bharata, Swami Satyapriyanandaji, is presently Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Chennai. Here he offers a thoughtful study of the path we have to tread to attain peace and blessedness.

Sri Sankara speaks of three things: *avidyā* (ignorance of one's real nature as the Self and a consequent sense of unfulfilment), *kāma* (desire for removing one's sense of unfulfilment through acquiring and preserving sense objects) and *karma* (actions for fulfilling those desires).

When the embodied being is ignorant about its real nature as the Atman, it thinks of itself as the psycho-physical entity, and being attached to the body and mind, enjoys the pleasures they can fetch. As the very nerves that carry the sensation of pleasure carry also the sensation of pain, the embodied being has to taste both pleasure and pain. The feeling of pain and pleasure both leave a mark on the soul and shapes the character of a human being. While pleasurable sensations are not as deep as the painful sensations, pain is a better teacher. Thus in every sense pain is a gift of God to the individual that makes him think of his folly in pursuing the pleasurable and evanescent things. Indeed as the saying goes, the burnt child dreads fire. However, it is not always necessary for us to learn through personal exposure to experiences and one may well learn through the experiences of others. But the individual is by nature forgetful and repeats the same mistakes over again.

From a different standpoint it is argued that both pleasure and pain are in fact painful. To illustrate this let us recall that a good person feels joy in the company of a saint and feels discomfiture in the presence of a sinner. But Tulsidas in his *Rāmcaritmānas* says, 'I pay

homage to the feet of both saints and sinners. Both give pain, but with a difference: for the absence of the former is like the pain of death, while the latter torture by their presence.' The avatar himself, while he dislikes the company of people who indulge in worldly talks, also sometimes prefers to go into solitude shunning the company of devotees too, on account of the fact that the death of one or another of the devotees causes him great pain. Thus while avoiding evil, we should also be prepared to avoid the good in the long run because both cause bondage.

The delusion of pleasure attracts us and so we perform endless activities to seek pleasure. Seeking pleasure becomes a habit. As a result of performance of actions with a desire for their fruits, the embodied being gets bound and suffers endless troubles even in this life and also faces the dire consequence of having to be born again and again with new tendencies added to his stock of existing habits. The habit of many lifetimes (for those who believe in rebirth) is hard to eradicate. Regarding the tenacity of habits it is said that even if you try ever so hard to erase it, you erase only the *h* and 'a bit' remains. You try harder and erase the *a* and the 'bit' remains. You still strive and erase the *b* and you find that 'it' remains.

Every child appears to be sweet and well-behaved, but as it grows, the latent *saṁskāras* (tendencies acquired from previous births) show up. Oftentimes even before we are aware of what is happening, we are in the

grip of these tendencies which make us work like machines. Tossed to and fro, we feel that we are in a very helpless state. Who will help us out? That we shall have to raise ourselves through our own efforts seems to such a one to be as good as saying that there is no hope.

In *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* we come repeatedly across this question, 'Sir, what is the way?' Sri Ramakrishna himself answers this question in many ways depending on the questioner, and what is more important, asks this question himself to build up a conversation on this important theme and to remind his listeners to be wide awake to this quest for a way out of bondage. Some of the methods proposed by Sri Ramakrishna are: The company of holy persons, the chanting of the names and glories of God, and going into solitude. He also suggests cultivating discrimination between the real and the unreal, meditation on death, giving up all activity at the approach of evening (which recalls to the mind the approach of the evening of one's own life) and devoting oneself to the contemplation of Divinity. He designates both the junction of the day with night and of night with day as auspicious times for meditation and spiritual practices. He also adds the need to cultivate *puruṣakāra* (self-effort) through prayer to the Divine and by means of self-effort overcome one's past tendencies by resolving not to commit those mistakes once again. The Kali Yuga in which we live now is characterized by a short life-span, laziness, dull-wittedness and lack of luck. Sri Ramakrishna prescribed devotion mixed with knowledge for the people of this age.

To the individual who finds himself riding a chariot stuck up in the mud, these suggestions do not appear to be convincing. 'How exactly do I get out of bondage by these methods? How do I know how far I have gone? How am I to know whether at all I am progressing?' he thinks. 'Indeed, after so many days, months, and years of practice I

seem to be just where I was if not in a worse position,' he feels. It is not unusual to hear some say that their case is a hopeless one.

In the life of Swami Yogananda we find such a situation revealing the existence of simple and effective methods for spiritual progress:

Once he asked the Master how one could get rid of the sex-idea. When Sri Ramakrishna said that it could be easily done by prayer to God, this simple process did not appeal to him. He thought that there were so many persons who prayed to God, but nevertheless there was no change in their lives. He had expected to learn from the Master some Yogic practice; but he was disappointed, and came to the conclusion that this prescription of a simple remedy was the outcome of his ignorance of any other better means.... He always thought himself to be very clever. But on second thoughts he tried the remedy suggested by the Master. To his great surprise he found wonderful results and felt ashamed of his doubting mind. Afterwards Swami Vivekananda used to say, 'If there is anyone amongst us who is completely free from sex-idea, it is Yogin.'¹

The *Bhāgavata* begins with the mention of a fire sacrifice at Naimisharanya to be performed by Saunaka and other sages. To questions put reverentially by these sages to the highly honoured Suta, Suta expounded the philosophy of devotion by highlighting that the highest duty of the individual consists in doing that which generates devotion to the Lord. This devotion he characterized as (1) being without any motive, (2) unyielding to any obstacle, and (3) filling one's heart with peace after erasing all the inborn instincts and tendencies which appear formidable. This de-

1. *The Apostles of Sri Ramakrishna*, ed. Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), pp. 152-53.

votion takes one beyond the pursuit of lust and lucre and bestows peace and transcendental knowledge.

The constant contemplation of the play (*līlā*) of God enacted during his advent as an incarnation, is a veritable sword for cutting asunder the bondage of self-centred tendencies of work, which only go to strengthen the knot of egotism in the individual. Such is the outcome of recounting the glories of God and repeating His holy name that it is only those lacking in insight and divine grace who will feel disinterested to devote their minds to such divine contemplation.

It is well known that people who wish to acquire knowledge regarding the things of the world approach the experts in the field and consult books in libraries. Even so, those who wish to cultivate love for God must go to places of pilgrimage, keep the company of the holy, study the scriptures which are the utterances of God or of illumined souls and repeat with unswerving devotion the sanctifying and redeeming name of God. By resorting to sacred precincts, one gets an opportunity to associate oneself with, and serve, holy men. Such service strengthens one's faith in spiritual matters, increases the desire to hear more and more about the Lord, and gradually generates an instinctive delight in such hearing. The scope of the term 'holy company' is even wider than the mere company of holy men and women; it includes the company of scriptures and the company of the Divine within and around us. Thus all forms of holy company, by the very term, imply a communion with the Divine. Such a communion is also possible by consciously serving God in the *jīvas*, because God dwells in all beings whether it is within our experience or not.

By repeating the name of God, one becomes pure in body and mind. It is said that until one is initiated into spiritual life by an illumined guru through the imparting of the

redeeming name of God, one is impure. God manifests Himself in the hearts of those who hear the account of His deeds, and erases all the evil tendencies blocking their spiritual development. Thus what appeared formidable to the beginner on the spiritual path becomes easily realized in due time.

When the obstructing gross evil tendencies are mitigated through constant application to the service of holy men, the study of holy scriptures and repeating the name of God, one develops a steady and unshakable love of the Lord of abounding glory and grace. With the gross evil tendencies gravitating the mind to worldly pursuits quelled by the spiritual practices, it is only logical that the human soul will be steadfast in its devotion to the Spirit.

Continued practice causes devotion to grow further. The mind is thereby freed from the agitations of subtle instinctive passions like greed and lust—the products of *tamas* and *rajas* respectively—and gets established in the peace and poise of *sattva*. As Sri Ramakrishna said, the three *guṇas* are like robbers in a forest. They rob the individual of his treasure (the knowledge of Atman) and make him behave like a beggar. While *rajas* binds, *tamas* kills, and *sattva* frees the individual and shows him the way out of the forest to his destination. Just as *tamas* is to be transcended by *rajas*, even so *rajas* is to be transcended by *sattva*. And finally *sattva* too is to be transcended.

In the aspirant who has, through the practice of devotion, attained to purity and poise of mind as also to freedom from every form of worldly attachment, is generated the intuition of the supreme Being. Thus this knowledge of the supreme Being is not to be derived by any amount of worldly knowledge, by any amount of scriptural reading, by any amount of holy company, or by any amount of spiritual practices. It comes

through all these in the fullness of time. Those who have not risen to the plane of intuitive perception cannot have the faintest idea of it. Their learned talks about this experience is just an expression of the ignorant.

When the supreme Soul is thus intuited within oneself, the knots of the heart that make one feel oneself as an ego (one with the body) are severed; the doubts of the mind are dispelled; and all accumulated *karmas* of the past as also those in the offing are liquidated. And this is what the individual has been striving for.

For this reason wise men who perceive in the pursuit of sensual pleasures only endless sorrow, joyfully take steps to cultivate supreme devotion to the Lord, which brings peace and blessedness to the heart of the individual.

By studying this scheme of a person's spiritual growth, one can clearly see wherein the suggestions of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda fit. The company of the holy, the repetition of the name of God and the singing of His glories, the going into solitude, the cultivation of discrimination and *puruṣakāra*, the renunciation of lust and lucre as also every form of living that stresses the wholehearted communion with the Divine form effective means for the liberation of the

soul from the sorrow that engulfs it. But all this comes in due time. The expert physician knows when the boil on one's person is ripe enough for surgical intervention.

We have seen earlier how in the life of Swami Yogananda the simple remedy of prayer to God raised his mind above the sex-idea, a problem of every spiritual aspirant. We see in the life of Narada how holy company helped him in his spiritual progress. In the *Bhāgavata* (1.5.23-31), Narada relates his antecedents and states how by being engaged in attending on holy men (who had gathered for a retreat during the rainy season) with dedication and full attention, he pleased them to the extent of being allowed to take the sacred remnants of food left by them. Being purified thereby, he developed taste for a life of devotion to God and listening constantly to the recital of the play of His incarnation as Sri Krishna. Listening with faith and devotion to these recitals, Narada developed unswerving delight in God's name and divine acts. He later experienced that the whole universe is generated by the *māyā* (Power) of God and transcended both *tamas* and *rajas*. At the end of their retreat, the holy men imparted to Narada, out of compassion, the transcendental knowledge of the Divine which enabled him to obtain the grace of the *māyā* of God by which alone an embodied soul attains to His being. □

Swamiji Learns Drawing

Maud Stumm writes: 'One day he (Swamiji) told me that he wanted to undertake some sort of work.... Would I give him drawing lessons? So...at an appointed hour he came, promptly, bringing to me, with a curious little air of submission, a huge red apple, which he laid in my hands, bowing gravely. I asked him the significance of this gift, and he said, "in token that the lessons may be fruitful"—and such a pupil he proved to be! Once only did I have to tell him anything; his memory and concentration were marvellous, and his drawings strangely perfect and intelligent for a beginner. By the time he had taken the fourth lesson, he felt quite equal to a portrait; so...Turiyananda posed, and was drawn capitally.... Many great ones may come to that room in its future years, but never again that childlike man, toiling over his crayons, with as single a mind and heart as if that were his vocation. How often he thanked me for the pleasure it gave him, and for the joy of learning, even that!'

—from *Reminiscences of Vivekananda*

Swami Vivekananda in Samadhi—A Photograph

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Swami Prabhanandaji, an accomplished scholar specially in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature, has several works in Bengali and English to his credit. Presently Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, Revered Maharaj is also one of the Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math and a Member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Among the photographs of Swami Vivekananda available, there is only one which was taken when he was in deep meditation or samadhi. This photograph can be seen on the altars of temples and prayer halls of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission centres, non-affiliated centres, as also in numerous family shrines. This is by far the most favourite photograph of Swamiji, and innumerable people use it for meditation on him. Unfortunately, the 'discovery' published in *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries* (1986 edition, Vol. 4, p. 521) by Marie Louise Burke (now Sister Gargi), claiming that Swamiji posed for this picture at a studio in London in 1896, has hurt the cherished sentiments held by monastics and devotees since the last 100 years. Moreover, it is a wrong deduction, based on unreliable or wrongly interpreted material. It is written in *New Discoveries*: 'As the time for Swamiji's departure from England drew near, Miss Souter, as though to stay the sun in its passage, had the professional photographer Alfred Ellis take twelve studio pictures of him—one of which was the familiar meditation photo....'

This information was based on a proof-sheet of photos from Alfred Ellis & Walery, plus a series of articles written by Brahmachari Satyachaitanya (later Swami Satyarupananda, who passed away in 1966) and published in *Viswavani*, a Bengali monthly of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math (cf. Vol. II, Bengali Year 1335). [Hereafter we

shall refer to these writings as *Satyachaitanya*.] In these articles, Brahmachari Satyachaitanya claimed that he took his material from the diaries of Swami Abhedananda. But the following observations should be taken into consideration by all serious students of Swami Vivekananda:

1. When asked about these diaries, the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, which is their sole custodian, said that they did not have the diaries supposed to have been used by Brahmachari Satyachaitanya. And the diaries reproduced in *The Complete Works of Swami Abhedananda* (Vol. 10) start from August 1897, when he arrived in America from London. So either Swami Abhedananda did not maintain a diary during his stay in London, or the diary/diaries are lost.

2. The contents and style of writing in the 'diaries' used by Brahmachari Satyachaitanya are entirely different from those of the available diaries of Swami Abhedananda, and we have enough reason to believe that he did not use any diary of Swami Abhedananda at all.

3. There are many factual errors in these articles. According to Brahmachari Satyachaitanya, Swami Abhedananda said:

(a) that Swamiji took the name Vivekananda after his arrival in America (*Satyachaitanya*, p. 714). (However, Belur Math archives possesses several letters written by Swamiji before he left for the USA on 31 May 1893, in which he signed his name as Swami Bibekananda, Swami Vivekananda, etc.)

(b) that when Swamiji was on the dais at the Parliament of Religions he did not know that he would have to speak (*Satyachaitanya*, p. 714).

(c) that on Swamiji's arrival in Chicago he was given shelter by a professor of Chicago University. This professor introduced him to his friends, including Dr Wright, who had come from his own city, New York, as a delegate to the Parliament of Religions. Dr Wright then introduced Swamiji to Dr Barrows (*Satyachaitanya*, pp. 713-4). (Readers of the *Life of Swami Vivekananda* know well that the real facts were very much different from those mentioned above.)

(d) that when Haramohan Mitra brought the news cuttings sent by Swami Vivekananda, the inmates of the Alambazar Math started asking who 'Swami Vivekananda' was, and their doubts were resolved only when they received Swamiji's letter (*Satyachaitanya*, p. 714). (Now, Swamiji's first letter to his brother disciples from America was dated 19 March 1894. But we know that Swamiji's friend Haridas Viharidas Desai, the Dewan of Junagad, went to Calcutta in November 1893 as a member of the Royal Opium Commission. At that time he visited Swamiji's mother as well as the monks at Alambazar and informed them about Swamiji's success at the Parliament of Religions. He also gave a feast to the monks then.)

It is impossible for Swami Abhedananda to have made these statements, as he would certainly have known better.

4. Brahmachari Satyachaitanya also claimed that Swamiji told Swami Abhedananda that soon after his arrival in Chicago he was in dire financial difficulties. What little money he had was spent to send a cable to Madras. In this difficult situation he demanded that 'Thakur must appear before me and advise me that I should continue here. If he does not, I shall return home. At that time

Sri Ramakrishna appeared before me in a vision and assured me. Through his grace soon thereafter I received money sent through Thomas Cook & Son' (*Satyachaitanya*, p. 715).

5. Again, the articles contain insinuations about Swamiji which seem to have been written with the motive of discrediting him. In one place the author says that Swamiji did not maintain any regularity about eating. According to the author, some days Swamiji would eat his fill and other days he would starve. Some days he would eat fish etc, and other days he would eat only some fruit. As a result, he would occasionally suffer from stomach troubles. Swami Abhedananda tried to correct Swamiji many times but failed (*Satyachaitanya*, p. 477). The author also claims that Swami Abhedananda said the lecture bureau which Swamiji worked for used to pay Swamiji huge sums of money (*Satyachaitanya*, p. 716). But we know from Swamiji's letters that he was actually cheated by the bureau.

6. About Swamiji's photo, Brahmachari Satyachaitanya says that twelve photographs of Swamiji, including the one in meditation, were taken at the studio of Alfred Ellis & Waverly (the name actually was Walery), at 57 Baker Street, in Swami Abhedananda's presence (*Satyachaitanya*, p. 858). A proof-sheet of photographs from this studio shows, however, that of the twelve photos on the sheet, only six were of Swamiji, the other six being of some other person. The author also said that while taking the meditation photo, Swamiji covered his trousers and shoes with his robe. According to him, Swamiji did this because Europeans did not approve of showing the feet, for they do not worship a holy person's feet as Hindus do. However, it is obvious that in the photo Swamiji is sitting in *padmasana*, so the question of hiding his trousers and feet has hardly any relevance.

Swamiji in London, 1896

We know that Swami Abhedananda was in London from October 1896 to 31 July 1897.

Swami Saradananda and Goodwin had left London for America on 25 June 1896, but Goodwin returned in October 1896. Swamiji himself stayed in London from April 1896 to December 1896, with a gap of about two months when he went on a tour to Switzerland and several other places of Europe. Mahendranath Dutta, Swamiji's second brother, was also there from 1 April 1896 to sometime in 1902. If Swami Abhedananda had accompanied Swamiji to the studio, as Brahmachari Satyachaitanya claims, it is highly doubtful that Swamiji would have allowed photos to be taken of himself and not have had at least one photo taken along with his beloved brother disciple. Nor is there any mention of this photo session in the studio in Swami Abhedananda's autobiography, *Amar Jivan Katha* (Vol. 2). Goodwin and Mahendranath Dutta are also silent about it, although both of them were living with Swamiji at that time and both wrote detailed accounts of Swamiji's life then—Goodwin in his letters to Mrs Sara Bull and Mahendranath Dutta in his books.

In the book *Vivekananda: A Biography in Pictures*, published by Advaita Ashrama in 1966, the photo of Swamiji in meditation is reproduced on page 61 with the caption 'In London, 1896'. And on page 116 it is said that this photo was taken in London during a class, but that there is another version, according to which it was taken in New York. The material for this book was taken from notes prepared by Swami Sankaranandaji Maharaj, the seventh President of the Ramakrishna Order. Many of the monks have heard from their seniors, including Presidents and Vice-Presidents of this Order, that this photo was taken when Swamiji had gone into samadhi while demonstrating some instructions to his class.

Swamiji's brother Mahendranath Dutta, in his book *Londone Vivekananda* (Bengali), confirms that Swamiji did indeed go into samadhi during a class in London. He says that Swamiji was one day giving a talk for 45

minutes, explaining various kinds of samadhi and mentioning the changes brought about by them. He then sat down in *padmasana*, and went into samadhi. Again, in *Sri Sri Ramakrishner Anudhyan* (Bengali), Mahendranath Dutta writes that several photographs were taken of Swamiji when he was delivering lectures in London in 1896.

Sister Nivedita, in a letter dated 13 March 1899 to Miss MacLeod, mentioned another incident in which Swamiji went into samadhi during a class in New York. She wrote: 'Such greatness, such sweetness, such humility as I see in him [Swamiji] towards her [Abhayananda], I could not have imagined. "I was a fool," he said to her, about his Samadhi in the New York class—"a teacher has no right to let himself go into trance"—and she calls that the best lesson he ever gave her!!!! She accepts this statement you see' (*Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. 1, p. 96). Miss MacLeod also once found Swamiji in samadhi at Camp Percy in New Hampshire. That Swamiji would become immersed in samadhi publicly has been recorded elsewhere also, but these incidents always embarrassed him.

Swamiji's Photos on the Proof-sheet

The photos of Swamiji are reproduced and discussed in three places: *Vivekananda: A Biography in Pictures* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1966), *Vivekananda: East Meets West* by Swami Chetanananda (St Louis: Vedanta Society, 1995), and *Vedanta Kesari* (Vols. 82-83, 1995-96). The six photos that are referred to in *New Discoveries* (Vol. 4, pp. 521, 529) as being on the proof-sheet of Alfred Ellis & Walery are in all of these. This proof-sheet contains the following photos of Swamiji:

Upper set:

- (a) bust of Swamiji with robe and turban (right profile); and
- (b) the well-known meditation pose.

Lower set:

- (c) full-length figure with robe and turban;
- (d) full-length figure with robe and no

turban;

(e) full-length figure with robe and turban (right profile); and

(f) bust of Swamiji with robe but no turban (full face).

The three works mentioned above do not agree with one another about when these photos were taken, although they all say that the photos were taken in London. *Vivekananda: A Biography in Pictures* says that (a), (d), and (e) were taken in May 1896 (pp. 60, 63); (b) and (f) were taken in 1896 (pp. 61, 65); and (c) was taken in December 1896 (p. 64). *Vivekananda: East Meets West* says that (a), (b), (c), (e), and (f) were taken in December 1896 (pp. 81, 82, 102, 84, and 83 respectively); and (d) was taken in 1896 (p. 19). Finally, *Vedanta Kesari*, March 1996 number says that all six photographs were taken in December 1896 (pp. 97-100).

The photos in *Vivekananda: East Meets West* are particularly clear. A close look at them shows the following points: First, the robes worn by Swamiji in pictures (a), (d), (e), and (f), all have five seams around the neck. Picture (c) is not clear. But the robe Swamiji is wearing in the meditation photo, picture (b), shows clearly that there are six seams around the neck, plus there are some vertical seams down the front edge of his robe which are not on the robe worn in the other photos. It is unlikely that Swamiji would have worn two different yet similar robes for the same studio sitting. Second, the turban he is wearing in the

meditation picture also shows some differences from the one worn in the other photos—in shape, size, tail, and folds. Third, the backdrop and studio props seen in three of the other photos are not seen in the meditation photo.

The fact that the proof-sheet bears the name of Alfred Ellis & Walery does not necessarily mean that all the photos were taken at the same time in the studio. The photographer, it seems to us, was engaged by some persons for taking Swamiji's photos at different places—at the place where Swamiji was giving a class as well as in the studio. It is clear from the proof-sheet itself that it was meant only for reference, to select photos. So it is quite likely that the studio preserved all the pictures taken of Swamiji on one proof-sheet.

As doubts have been cast on the story behind Swamiji's meditation picture, it is important to put the record straight by clearing away all wrong information and dubious stories. In September 1998, the sixth impression of *Vivekananda: A Biography in Pictures* was printed, but the publisher, Advaita Ashrama, still includes the note that the photo of Swamiji in meditation was taken during a class. Unless conclusive evidence to the contrary is provided, the tradition should not be changed. Besides this, for the reasons mentioned above, we can say that the photograph of Swami Vivekananda in meditation was indeed taken during one of his classes and not in a studio. □

From Next Month

In Instalments

Professor Alan Hunter's

CHINESE BUDDHISM AND VEDANTA

SECTIONS INCLUDE

☆ Chan Buddhism ☆ Pure Land Buddhism

☆ Esoteric Schools of Chinese Buddhism ☆ Humanitarian Buddhism

☆ Swami Vivekananda's Four Yogas and Chinese Buddhism

Sarvamangala

'Are you there?' asked a voice. It was the image-maker. 'Why could this gentleman have come to me?' thought the poor brahmin. The answer came very soon. 'Dear brahmin, aren't you keen on worshipping Mother Durga? You need not have to pay a penny to me. I shall make a beautiful image of the Mother for you.' The brahmin was surprised beyond surprise. How could this happen! He could not understand. This pious brahmin was respected by one and all in his village. His only daughter, Sarvamangala, was given away in marriage to the landlord's only son. Though his daughter's luck was better, the brahmin himself led a very poor life. But he had one great desire: to worship Mother Durga at home. Each year, the brahmin's desire would increase, and he would shed tears that he could not worship the Mother that year also. Durga Puja, of course, is not an ordinary affair: the poor brahmin could never afford such expenditure. But the brahmin's prayers were endless: 'O Mother! Days and years are rolling by. I am getting old. Shall I die without worshipping you?' This year, however, days before the worship, things appeared different. And now, suddenly, the image-maker had promised a beautiful image free of cost. The brahmin could not sleep the whole night. He could not understand Mother's ways.

The image might come. What about other arrangements? The brahmin only knew one thing: to pray. A few days later, the local shopkeeper came. 'Dear holy man, I hear you will be performing Mother's worship this year. How strange you never told me this! Tell me whatever you need. I shall provide all that is necessary. What I want is that the Mother should be worshipped without any

difficulty.' The brahmin was left wondering at the play of Mother. Yet he was hesitant. His dutiful wife went on inspiring him day and night. Slowly, one after another, the milkman, the leaf-vendor, the vegetable seller, all talked to him and readily came forward to donate their produce.

'It is a big affair. Who will help us in this big work?' said the brahmin. 'Why not call Sarvamangala for the occasion. She will help us,' suggested his wife. 'To think of inviting Sarvamangala! Don't you know what a grand festival it will be in the landlord's house? Will he spare his only daughter-in-law at such an important occasion?' But she went on pressing him to invite Sarvamangala, and so he decided to go once and request the landlord.

It was a long, long walk to the landlord's house. He hesitantly broached the topic. 'After years of prayer, by Mother's grace we shall be performing Durga Puja at our residence in our own humble way. I have come to request you to spare Sarvamangala for those few days.' 'How could that be possible?' retorted the landlady. 'You know very well that we too worship Durga, and Sarvamangala is our only daughter-in-law.' He begged repeatedly, but they were inflexible. The brahmin left in tears. He slowly walked back. As he was crossing a field, he heard from behind, 'Father! O father!' He turned to see who it was. It was Sarvamangala! 'My child! What have you done! Why have you come away?' asked the worried father. Sarvamangala laughed and said, 'No, no, father. I did not run away. Seeing you leave the house in tears, my mother-in-law changed her mind and said that I may go. So I took this servant along with me and came running to you. Come on! Let us go.' The servant who accompanied

Sarvamangala said, 'O respected brahmin! Do you know who she is? She is goddess Durga herself!' Sarvamangala silenced the servant, 'Shh! You and your Durga! Father, don't listen to this servant. He always calls me names—Durga, Kali, Lakshmi... He is slightly deranged.' The brahmin smiled. He was glad to see that everyone loved Sarvamangala at her husband's house.

When they reached home, seeing Sarvamangala, her mother shed tears of joy: 'I knew her father-in-law would understand our situation and spare dear Sarvamangala. My daughter, this time, your father's prayers have been heard. All arrangements have been done by Mother's grace. With your help, we can worship Durga well.' Seeing her daughter bubbling with infectious joy, she said with pride, 'My Sarvamangala is a fountain of joy. She brings joy to everyone around.' The servant cried, 'O pious lady, she is Durga herself...' 'You again! Mother, don't pay any attention to this idiot. He is always like that...' The mother shed tears of joy at her daughter's fortune. 'You may scold the servant. But see how he respects you,' she said.

The sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth days of Durga Puja passed on swiftly. Many people came and enjoyed the worship. All were fed. People were stunned to see the way Sarvamangala worked. She looked after everything: cooking, offerings, feeding devotees, arranging for worship. Always smiling, she would pay particular attention to everyone. All praised the brahmin for his devotion and Sarvamangala's dexterity. The brahmin could not have performed the worship so faultlessly had there been no Sarvamangala, all said.

It was at last the tenth day: the day of Vijaya. The sad moment had come. The Mother had to be sent away to the Himalayas. The brahmin wept, thinking that it would be his last day with the Mother, whom he had worshipped as a fulfilment of years of long-

ing. On the last day of worship, the Mother is offered puffed rice mixed with sweetened curd. The brahmin was about to offer the delicacy when Sarvamangala came from somewhere. 'Father, I am hungry. I shall eat some of it.' And even before he could stop her, Sarvamangala had eaten a morsel or two. Sacrilege! The father became angry: 'What irreverence is it, Sarvamangala! For you to have done this! To eat before offering! The Mother will certainly be displeased. Go away from here.' Even before his words had ended, Sarvamangala got up and walked away with her servant.

Coming to know of Sarvamangala's mistake, her mother said: 'For the last three days, neither of us told her to eat. She worked so hard, fed everyone, but herself was never seen to eat or even drink water. She would naturally be hungry. What if she ate? We can always prepare the dish again. Go and console her now.' Hearing her words the brahmin cursed himself, 'What a horrible mistake I made. I never told her even once to eat!' The search began. 'Did you see our Sarvamangala?' they asked everyone. The brahmin ran like one mad to the landlord's house. 'Sarvamangala! O Sarvamangala!' he cried. 'What happened to you, father? Why do you look like this? Did the worship go on well?' 'My daughter! Please pardon me! I stopped you from eating it. You ran away in anger. Come with me. Let me feed you to my heart's content...' The daughter seemed puzzled: 'I do not understand anything. Why should I pardon you? When did you scold me?' The brahmin said, 'Don't pretend to be ignorant, dear child. I know you were hungry...' The entire household gathered and all were wonderstruck to hear the brahmin's story. 'No, Sarvamangala did not go,' they all said.

Slowly it became clear. The servant was right. Durga herself had come. 'You came to me but I missed you!' cried the brahmin and fainted. □

COMMENT

A Blitzkrieg Beyond Compare!

In Robert Southey's 'After Blenheim', Kaspar tells his little grandchildren about a great war. He narrates how 'many a childing mother and newborn baby died,' 'how 'many thousand bodies lay rotting in the sun,' and how 'things like that must be at every famous victory.' When tiny Wilhelmine cries, 'Why, 'twas a very wicked thing!' Kaspar says, 'Nay, nay, my little girl, it was a famous victory.'

Pakistan wanted such a victory. The enemy, notorious for his inhuman acts of cruelty in and around Kashmir times without number, crossed Indian borders this time. He was warned to retreat, but he was insolently adamant. So India had to take stern action. The world should know that India has shown remarkable restraint throughout, even though one large section of her Kashmiri children are orphans since long. To fight a wicked strategy, our heroes thundered, blasted the intruders with lethal force, and drove the fools out with ease. We burnt the enemy's dirty desire to disturb our peace to a cinder. The enemy, like on earlier occasions, was left bruised, battered and worried. No doubt, a few hundred precious lives were lost, hundreds of families are yet to overcome shocks of bereavement, and the nation itself is yet to recover from the pain of their heroes' deaths. The nation unitedly prays for them.

None of us have forgotten the recent conflict with Pakistan. None of us should forget it. For the first time, perhaps, India showed the world that it was one. No one can dare approach us if we are united. During the Kargil conflict, from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, all stood hand in hand behind our fighting soldiers. When some magazines published startling accounts of the nation's sacrifices, the world was certainly stunned at India's wonderful spirit. There was an instance of some ailing, old women in an Andhra old age home, who had little money for themselves, and so fasted one whole day to save money, and donated that money to the relief fund. This, then, is the awakened India of Swamiji. It was lack of this spirit of unity that had led to our downfall and we were enslaved for a millennium. No more of that!

Kashmir is the at the heart of the conflict. The enemy wants Kashmir; rather, he pretends before the world that Kashmiris are a suffering lot, desperate to attain freedom from India's clutches. Reading Pakistani news cuttings, one is left wondering at the shameless audacity of a nation to systematically brainwash its people with false propaganda. No small attempt has been made by the enemy to draw the world's attention to the conflict. Yet all such attempts have ended in miserable failure.

What is the solution to such seemingly unending conflicts? Good sense. A wall of hatred had been raised between the two Germanies; it was broken. Fighting is bad. In spite of all our tall claims of being civilized, we have not learnt lessons. The enemy could easily have built a few Kashmirs for himself with all the money and manpower and mental energy he is wasting on proxy wars since his independence. If there had been peace and mutual love, how much could have been saved on both sides! Still, all is not lost. The duty of every noble citizen today is to pray for good sense to prevail. Let us step into the new century with a smile and with love—not with tears and hatred.

Reviews and Notices

JAINISM: A PICTORIAL GUIDE TO THE RELIGION OF NON-VIOLENCE: By Kurt Titze. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110007. 1998. Pp. xii+267. Rs.2500.

Here, in vivid pictures and illuminating text, are nearly three thousand years of Jaina history. From Rishabhanatha to Mahavira, from Satrunjaya to Sravana-Belgola, from Srimad Rajachandra to Veerendra Heggade this fascinating pictorial survey embraces the major sects of Jainism, its famous sites of pilgrimage, and its outstanding representatives of both north and south India.

The author, Kurt Titze, has collected more than 350 portraits, photographs, facsimiles, archeological illustrations and other pictorial material germane to his field of study. His achievement, the result of years of research, was made possible through the co-operation of leading universities, libraries, museums, and private collections, both here and abroad.

We know of few instances where such likenesses, traditional, artistic and photographic, have been assembled in one volume. The reproductions of paintings, statues and other artworks relating to the wonderful shrines and monuments of all lands and ages will enrich anyone's enjoyment and appreciation of the 'Religion of Non-violence.'

Along with Hinduism and Buddhism, Jainism is one of the three major religions that developed within the Indian civilization. It continues to be a living faith in India with more than three million adherents, who extend over nearly all the Indian states but are chiefly concentrated in two regions—Gujarat and parts of Rajasthan, where the Svetambara sect prevails, and Karnataka, where the Digambaras are dominant.

In a comprehensive chapter on 'Jainism' which he wrote for Basham's *Cultural History of India*, Prof A.N. Upadhye, a senior Jainologist with a well-established international reputation, observes: 'Its contribution to the Indian heritage is more significant than might be expected for its numerical strength. As an institutionalized religion, it has held its ground all along...it has produced worthy monks and laymen of whom any society could be proud. The Jaina contributions to Indian art and architecture, to the preservation and enrichment of Indian literature, and to the culture of Indian languages, both Aryan and Dravidian, are praiseworthy.

Lastly, the religious instincts inculcated by Jainism have left an abiding impression on many aspects of Indian life....Numerous traces of Jaina influence on Indian life can be detected. The worship of idols in a refined form, the building of temples, the founding of charitable lodges for men and animals, the preservation of rich libraries of manuscripts, and the distribution of food and other necessities to the poor; these are some of the outstanding features of Jaina society, and to a large extent they have been imitated by other Indian religious groups.'

But such has been the avidity with which everything possible has been claimed as either Hindu or Buddhist, that even today only a few features of Indian culture are positively admitted to be of Jaina origin. Kurt Titze's *Jainism: A Pictorial Guide to the Religion of Non-violence* comes as a polite rejoinder to such presumptions.

Jainism's most important gift to the world is, of course, its doctrine of *ahimsa*. In its insistence on non-violence Jainism went much farther than any other religion. Most religions have casually preached non-violence but nowhere, except in Jainism, is the basic creed so methodically developed to pervade the entire moral code. The Jainas are perhaps the only people who have explained the doctrine of *ahimsa* in a systematic manner, because all their other values are elaborated on this basis. Their *asramas* or retreats for orphans and widows; their *dharmaśālas* or rest-houses for pilgrims; and their *pañjarapolas* or animal infirmaries, are all extensions of the *ahimsa* principle. In recent times, some of the facets with which Gandhiji invested his *ahimsa* remind us of Jaina monks, who were quite aware of the power of *ahimsa* as a social factor.

On a more terrestrial level, the religious zeal that Jainism instilled among its votaries found concrete expression all over the country in works of art and architecture: statues, caves, temples.

The Jainas gave concentrated devotion to architecture, and during the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries which saw the zenith of Jaina prosperity, their temples were the finest in India. Not only were kings reckoned amongst the most ardent disciples of this faith, but great wealth poured into the community; and as this acquisition of power and wealth coincided with a time of real religious fervour, it is not surprising that there followed a marvellous epoch of temple-building. Mt Abu, lifted 4000 feet above the desert and bearing on its bosom shrines that are marvels of fretted beauty, the frowning rock of Girnar crowned with

its diadem of temples, Satrunjaya in its surpassing holiness, half fortress and half temple-city, the almost perfect Parsvanath temple rising cone after cone to a majestic height and sheltering on its carved surfaces a veritable city of Jaina saints, bear witness to the fervour of those days.

The Jaina architecture of the south forms a class apart. The best known form is that of open-air courtyards containing *manastambhas* or free-standing pillars, and colossal images of Gommatesvara, a Digambara saint unknown in northern India. The most famous of these is that at Sravana-Belgola in Karnataka, which, cut from a single block of gneiss, stands some fifty-seven feet high. The asceticism and self-denial praised in Jaina religious lore is demonstrated in this medieval statue. The hero-turned-saint stands bolt upright in the posture of meditation known as *kayotsarga*, with feet firm on the earth and the soul virtually set free from the trammels of matter. The faint smile on a face full of vitality is a portrayal of poise. Other well-known statues dedicated to this saint are to be found at Venur and Karkala.

In other parts of India, the cave temples at Udayagiri and Khandagiri in Orissa, Rajgir in Bihar, Ellora in Maharashtra, and Sittannavasal in Tamil Nadu are noted and contain some beautiful wall paintings.

Like the erection of monuments, the preservation of copies of religious manuscripts too is regarded as a pious act. The religious merit that accrues from hearing and reading sacred Jaina texts encouraged the careful and loving preservation of manuscripts. Illustrated with miniature paintings these manuscripts are preserved in Jaina monastery libraries. In addition to the miniatures, metal plaques, painted wooden book covers, fabric and wall paintings (eg *astamangalas*) depicting mythological scenes and auspicious symbols are also known.

Jainas are also renowned for such various types of munificence as conducting pilgrimages, managing relief operations and running educational institutions. Several leading Jaina business houses have extended patronage to research and publication in various branches of knowledge. In fact, Motilal Banarsidass, the publishers of this *Pictorial Guide*, are themselves benefactors of some standing.

The essence and all the above-described diversity of Jainism seems uniquely capturable in Kurt Titze's sumptuous collection. In years of shooting his subject he has adeptly maneuvered between the splendours of ancient Abu and the busy life of modern Dharmasthala. His eloquent, finely observed study shows how the show-places over the centuries have become a lens through which the Jaina vision of the world is precisely focused. He

reveals the spiritual and historical resonance of the holy spots where mighty heroes performed awesome austerities, where shrines and monuments were built, where saints have been imagined and imaged in a thousand ways. He describes the rites of its temples, the exuberance of its festivals, and the dynamism of its philanthropic establishments. In his account of the sacred history, geography, and art of the religion, its elaborate and thriving rituals, its myths and literature, and its importance to pilgrims and seekers, Kurt Titze uses his wealth of scholarship to make the Jaina tradition come powerfully alive so that we come to understand the meaning of this sacred religion to countless believers who have been following it down centuries.

The book is an invitation to marvel at, learn from, and feel the strangeness and attraction of one of the great religions of the world. It helps us to see and feel how faith expresses itself in different environments. Introducing National Geographic Society's 1978 publication, *Great Religions of the World*, Krister Stendahl, then dean of Harvard Divinity School, wrote: 'As we enter another man's world to study his faith, we should seek to see how it looks from within—and not treat his convictions as artifacts, his temples as museums. I do not have the right to visit his holy of holies insulated by the rubber soles of my globetrotter shoes.' As we turn the pages of this book it becomes evident that Titze shares Stendahl's attitude.

Swami Bhaswatananda
Mayavati

VĀSTU, ASTROLOGY AND ARCHITECTURE: Edited by Gayatri Devi Vasudev.
Published by Motilal Banarasidass.
1998. Pp. x+238. Rs.125.

The great Swami Vivekananda wanted Indians to study their own different branches of knowledge, and with that, English language and western science. It is gratifying to see various books written in English on subjects like Vāstu, the ancient art and science of architecture, with its source in the *Rg Veda* and many other ancient works.

The book under review, *Vāstu, Astrology and Architecture*, is an outcome of a symposium held in 1995 in Bangalore, organized by Raman Rajeswari Research Foundation, Bangalore, and edited by Smt Gayatri Devi Vasudev, the editor of *Astrological Magazine*, in an effort to explore Vāstu śāstra, an important limb of Jyotiṣa or astrology.

The book comprising thirty-three articles by various authors is divided into three sections: (1) Vāstu and its relevance to modern times, (2) Vāstu

and Jyotiṣa, and (3) Vāstu and temple architecture.

The fifteen essays in the first section, though repetitive in some parts, inform the reader about the origin and definition of Vāstu sastra, the names of 32 ancient scriptures available as source books, 18 expert sages, 4 ancient architects, the presiding deities of 8 directions as well as the planets affecting human beings. They also outline tests in examining sites for suitability, beneficial aspects of various shapes and orientations, approach roads, planning, design and construction of buildings as well as auspicious times for starting and occupying the building built.

The first four articles and the last two are sufficient to explain the underlying principles of Vāstu. Articles like the 5th, 10th and 11th are somewhat disappointing, and one would have expected much more from articles 7, 9 and 13 on Vāstu vis-a-vis modern engineering, industries, and hospitals. The 12th one on town planning is informative and makes good reading.

The section on Vāstu and astrology starts with an article which expects some knowledge of astrology from the reader. The 2nd article is a good discussion on different directions, planets and presiding deities affecting human habitats. The 3rd one is short, while the 4th article has a number of śloka and their meanings, but a little more than meanings was expected. The 5th and 6th articles are informative. The 7th has good illustrations, the 8th on Hindu geomancy is worth reading, while the last two articles appeared repetitive.

The third section has its 1st article unrelated to temple architecture, while the 2nd, though short, informs well about styles of temple architecture. The 3rd is about faults in reading the scriptures and practising them, while the 4th is well written and needs deep consideration. The 5th article, though not suited to that group, is on theatres and gives a lot of illustrations which need explanation. The article on Vāstu śāstra and ancient temples is comprehensive, especially the part on a temple of Karnataka. The basics of temple interiors is a short one but gives detailed accounts of locations and sizes of various parts of temples. The last article is unrelated to temples but is worth reading owing to the researches on Vāstu.

The editor could have avoided repetitions like *Vāstu Puruṣa Maṇḍala* drawing, and contradictions in the location of various rooms (eg, pages 104 and 159, 67 and 85). Though scientific materialsim based on a mechanistic view of life is deplorable, the scientific method of data collection, analysis, testing and its verifiable conclusions has an appeal to modern readers and thinking about loss of faith in the ancient wisdom, which almost every article seems to point out, is not fully warranted. The research foundation could have resolved to take

up a hospital, a factory, a house, and a town for planning according to Vāstu principles and come up with verifiable data and ready-made models for perpetuating the principles, or it could have checked a hundred buildings for their effectiveness in planning according to Vāstu. This could have brought more faith in Vāstu in the modern architectural considerations. The book deserves a thorough reading on account of a lot of information given by various learned authors.

Swami Tattwajnanananda
Ramakrishna Mission Shilpamandira
Belur Math

TAT TVAM ASI: THE UNIVERSAL MESSAGE IN THE BHAGAVADGITA (2 Volumes):
By Dr P. Viswambhara Nath. Published
by Motilal Banarsidass. 1998. Pp. 828.
Rs.750.

The *mahāvākya* 'tat tvam asi' signifies the identity or non-difference between the individual and the Absolute. This principal statement is found in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.8.7, repeated eight more times subsequently), which is a part of the 'Talavakāra Brāhmaṇa' of the *Sāma Veda*. It is spoken to Śvetaketu by his father Aruṇi Uddālaka by way of explaining the nature of *That* by knowing which everything else becomes known. Examples of gold and ornaments, clay and clay-pots, etc are given, and the essence of sacred knowledge, not usually available in formal schooling, is brought home to the young graduate. A *mahāvākya* is obviously a 'great proposition' conveying the essence of the scripture aphoristically. For Śaṅkara the *mahāvākya* is directed to removing the false sense of identity of the soul and the body (*tasmād-vikārānṛtādhikṛta-jīvātma vijñāna-vivartakam-avedaṁ vākyam tat tvamasīti siddham*. —*Chāndogya Upaniṣad-bhāṣya*, 6.16.3).

The *mahāvākya* is understood not directly, but by way of indirect application or secondary signification (*lakṣaṇa*). The Advaita tradition tries to explain the meaning of such statements through signification which partly retains and partly eliminates the express meaning of the terms (*jahad-ajahal-lakṣaṇa*). Thus, in the statement under reference, the limiting factor of *tvam* is given up and the consciousness part is retained. Likewise, in the term *tat*, the remoteness is discarded and the consciousness is retained. Thus the two terms *tat* and *tvam* stand on equal footing and the identity or non-difference is established between the two: *tat-tvam-asi*.

The author of the book under review, through

his detailed commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, holds that the essence of the text is to make one realize the oneness between the mortal man and the Absolute (*paramātmā*); to realize one's own true nature (*pratyabhijñā*). To recognize one's own divine nature and to discover the same divine status in all forms of existence in the universe is to realize the oneness of all beings (*advaita*).

The text of the *Gītā* begins with the word *dharma* and ends with *mama*. The author feels that Sañjaya, the narrator of the scene to the king, has understood the essence of the divine song as 'my dharma' (*ātma-dharma*) and holds that 'my dharma' is to recognize the presence of the *paramātmā* everywhere. This is undoubtedly *advaita* in its proper perspective.

Following the idea of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, (cf. his *Gūḍhārtha-dīpikā* commentary, introductory verses 8, 9, and 10), the first six chapters of the Song Divine deal with *tvam* or the individual. The next six chapters dwell on *tat* or the Absolute, and the last six chapters describe the identity between the two. This is also in tune with the Advaitic interpretation of the text that the *Gītā* deals mainly with knowledge as the sole means of salvation. However, it incorporates facets of the Dvaita as well as the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophies in the light of the message enshrined in the *Bhagavadgītā*. A large number of scholars, while commenting on the *Gītā*, find the text to be a non-unitary composition (see Richard Garbe, for instance). There are, however, others who find the teachings of the *Gītā* to be unitary (see Franklin Edgerton, for instance).

The commentator holds that the text preaches non-dualism. There are no two entities called the soul and the body. The soul is real and permanent whereas the body is temporary, hence unreal. Likewise, the 'I' and 'That' are not separate; the entire universe is part of the supreme Reality. This *advaita* doctrine has been taught by Śaṅkara. This philosophy, understood and followed, will help us to be selfless and contribute to the welfare of all in the universe, and will help us create a better tomorrow.

The commentary has been written by a medical practitioner, who lived in England for a long time, with a view to suit the teachings of the *Gītā* to the needs of the newer generation. It has the impact of the late Swami Chinmayananda's teachings on the *Gītā*. It also inspires to develop our spiritual lives. For the author, the bringing together of spiritual and moral values is real yoga. According to him, relentless pursuit of wealth and power is symptomatic of a deadly disease. Wealth and power are the means to some goal and are desirable only in a limited sense. Dedication to our duty and belief in the dignity of the individual are some of the values that lead us to the goal of life.

The book has been written in a lucid and clear style. It provides the text in Devanāgarī and transliteration along with English translation, followed by detailed comments. The edition has the blessings of Swami Hari Harji, President of the global Gita Ashram. This set is a valuable addition to the series of writings on the *Bhagavadgītā*.

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**THE DOCTRINE OF KARMA: ITS ORIGIN
AND DEVELOPMENT IN BRAHMANICAL,
BUDDHIST AND JAINA TRADITIONS: By Yu-
vraj Krishna. Published by Motilal Ba-
narsidass. 1997. Pp. xviii+650. Rs.595.**

Literally, karma means action. But actions are not isolated acts. They culminate in inevitable consequences, both good and bad, in this life or in a reincarnation. In Hinduism, karma is regarded as 'a neutral, self-perpetuating law of the inner cosmos much as gravity is an impersonal law of the outer cosmos' (Sivaya Subramuniaswami). Karma is of four types: the accumulated actions of previous births which do not influence a man's present life are called *sañcita*; the actions of past life which determine his destiny are called *prārabdha*; and the actions which are now performed are called *kriyamāṇa*. The *kriyamāṇa* is transformed into *sañcita* and becomes the basis of *āgāmi*.

Karma has also been classified as white (meaning good), black (meaning bad), mixed (both good and bad) and colourless (meaning insignificant). In a ritualistic sense, karma has six more categories to it. They are: daily (*nitya*), occasional, like pilgrimage, fasting, etc (*naimittika*), those performed with a specific purpose such as a sacrifice to obtain a son (*kāmya*), those activities undertaken with a spiritual motive (*ādhyātmika*), those relating to tutelary deities such as the repetition of a mantra (*ādhidāivika*), and those related to living beings (*ādhibhautika*).

This book provides a comprehensive study of the doctrine of karma in its various ramifications. It takes in its gamut such questions as: How do Indian religious traditions view karma? How does karma operate? How has the karma theory helped the evolution of the ideal of liberation? Is the doctrine of karma entwined with the concept of the four *yugas*? What is *niṣkāma* karma? Is there a 'balancing of karmas'? How is karma linked to social responsibility?

To begin with, the author describes three essential features of the doctrine of karma. Firstly, it

is an ethical or moral law; secondly, it is a law of retributive justice; thirdly, retributive justice is possible only through rebirth. The doctrine of karma exists in an 'embryonic form' in the *Saṁhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*. Although the *Rg Veda* mentions it 'about 40 times,' it is primarily used in the sense of sacrificial acts. The *Brāhmaṇas* specifically identify karma with 'liturgical rites.' Although there is 'absence of ethical or moral concepts in pre-Upaniṣadic Vedic literature,' the ideas of transmigration and rebirth occur both in the *Saṁhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas*.

The Upaniṣadic exposition of karma is somewhat ambivalent in the sense that they uphold karma as a moral law, and in the same vein teach how they can be 'destroyed or arrested and rendered sterile.'

The heterodox elaborations of karma are unique in many ways. Jainism, for example, regards karma as a form of matter which is atomic in its nature. The *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* states that the number of atoms of each karma is infinite and is to be found in all the six directions of space. 'It is this atomic matter which binds all souls.'

Jainism classifies karma into eight forms: those which impede right knowledge; those which shake right faith; those which cause delusion; those which lead to pleasure or pain; those which determine the nature of one's existence; those which prescribe the specific form of existence; those which determine one's status in society; and those which prevent a person from doing philanthropic work. In the Jaina way of life, five *ma-lāvratas* and five *anuvratas* are prescribed for monks and laymen, respectively, for the creation of a righteous social order. Like Hinduism and Buddhism, Jainism explains the factor of inequality among human beings as a product of good and bad karmas. As many as sixteen types of karma are mentioned in the Buddhist texts. Buddhism believes that man is tied to the wheel of birth and death and can attain nirvana only by breaking the chains of karma. Karma is regarded as a causative force, as a law of personal responsibility and as a law of inexorable retribution. Reincarnation is the working out of this law. None can escape the consequence of his deeds.

In Buddhism what distinguishes a brahmin from an outcaste is not birth but karma. The karmic law is not discriminatory 'like the man-made law codes.' According to the Buddha, past karmas determine the present caste of a human being and the present karmas determine the caste status in future births.

The book beautifully delineates the doctrine of karma as it occurs in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇas* and the six systems of Indian philosophy. It also relates karma to Indian astrol-

ogy, to Hindu law, to Sanskrit drama, to *Āyurveda* and to the incarnations of God.

The karma doctrine was opposed by the *Cārvākas*, *Niyativādins*, *Svabhāvavādins*, *Ajñānavādins* and other schools of thought. But the real danger to it came from the *Śūnyavāda* and *Vijñānavāda* of the Buddhists and the *Advaita* of *Śaṅkara*. It survived nevertheless.

The book contends that even though the doctrine of karma cannot be experimentally or empirically proved, it provides the best possible explanation for inequality and suffering in life, for the immense diversity in the universe, and for varying results produced by 'the equal human effort with identical environment or other related factors.' Besides, it debunks the view that karma breeds an attitude of resignation or fatalism.

The book, having five useful appendices, select bibliography, a comprehensive author, title and subject index, bespeaks of the author's erudition and the publisher's skill to produce it flawlessly.

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KALI, THE BLACK GODDESS OF DAKSHINESWAR: By Elizabeth U. Harding. Published by Motilal Banarsidass. 1998. Pp. xxxiii+318. Rs.195.

The massive Kali temple at Dakshineswar, erected by Rani Rasmani in the mid-nineteenth century, marks a new epoch in the spiritual history of the world. The temple was consecrated on 15 May 1855. Sri Ramakrishna, the younger brother of the officiating priest Ramkumar, then known as Gadadhar, was at his wits' end and could not decide his role in the participation of the celebrations. The clouds of doubt soon melted away and the world now knows the unfoldment of the white lotus, Ramakrishna.

An early death of Ramkumar catapulted Ramakrishna to the daily worship of Mother Kali, and the series of events that followed the next three decades spelled out the new gospel of the epoch to assuage the spiritual hunger of humanity.

Even so, the temple of Dakshineswar was not hitherto interpreted in such a lively manner by any of the earlier authors. Elizabeth U. Harding breaks a new path in temple (bio)graphy. She takes herself as a pilgrim to this not so ancient shrine of Kali, merges herself among the indigenous pilgrims, reading their emotions with empathy. This attitude has given a new shine to the descriptions which otherwise would have been bleak.

In the Introduction, the author elaborates the

concept of God as Mother. She traces the source of this concept in Indian mythology and also the evolution of Mother worship in India, and examines the legend of Sati, the consort of Siva.

The first chapter describes the temple premises and precincts. Devotees crowd from early dawn to offer their *puja* and prayers. They are from various parts of India, many of them from Calcutta and different parts of Bengal. They believe that the deity is as vibrant as she was when Ramakrishna used to worship her. The author takes the readers to the various areas of religious interest and supplies them with bits of information in Hindu mythology and religious practices. Then comes the description of the shrine proper. Various facets of the icon and the symbolism are explained, supported by Puranic references. Various names of Kali, apart from the one chosen by Rani Rasmani, Bhavatarini, are also explained. Kali's complexion is interpreted with reference to the *Mahanirvana Tantra*. 'Just as all colours disappear in black, so all names and forms disappear in Kali' (p. 47). More explanations are cited in the quotes from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. These are extremely satisfying. Siva's relationship with Mother Kali is also elucidated. Tantric origins of *mantra* and *yantra* are also explained.

The daily services in the shrine from the early hours of the morning till 9 pm is the subject-matter of the next chapter. This is followed by a chapter on the history of the Dakshineswar Kali temple and its surroundings. All the prominent spots in the temple premises are historically traced and described. The description is so vivid that readers can visualize the entire temple as it stands today.

The last chapter deals with the intoxicated mystic devotees of Kali. These include Ramprasad and Kamalakanta. There is an account of Raja Ramakrishna, a saint-king of the eighteenth century. Then, the trio, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, have been described in their relationship with Mother Kali. There is also a story of Bamakhepa, a tantric devotee of Ma Tara.

As one comes towards the end of the book, one feels that one has been all along moving in the presence of the vibrant Mother Kali of Dakshineswar. Herein lies the success of the author's endeavours. Though she commenced this work out of sheer curiosity to know about Kali, she succeeded in feeling the Divine Mother's breath, as it were, as she has enriched the pages of the book. The book has become a living biography of one of the most holy temples of the contemporary world—a temple charged with spiritual power by the *sadhana* of Sri Ramakrishna.

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**THE ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM: By
Swami Bhaskarananda. Published by
Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai
600004. 1998. Pp. xx+233. Rs.55.**

Swami Bhaskarananda's book, *The Essentials of Hinduism*, offers a comprehensive overview of Hinduism—the world's oldest religion. According to the author, the book was written to fulfill the demands of a predominantly Western audience. But whether the audience is Western or Indian, the need for a simplified version of Hinduism cannot be disputed. When the essential principles of Hinduism are dealt with in a simple and coherent manner, then the appeal increases.

The book is divided into twenty-two brief chapters. The content of each chapter is further sub-divided into its various significant aspects. The book begins with a general history of Hinduism. It then explicates the holy books, analyses the concept of God, moves on to the doctrines of karma, predestination, and reincarnation, and ends with the theory of *moksha* or liberation from *samsara*. Interspersed are chapters on Hindu society, Hindu ethics, the four yogas, mantras and sacred symbols, and the three *gunas*. The book concludes with appendices, a glossary, and an index. The pronunciation guide is an added asset. However, a too uncomplicated treatment of a complex subject can have its own inadequacies. There is the tendency to idealize and glorify outdated concepts. For instance, the author states that the remarriage of a widow would be a terrible shock to her children. 'Hindu legends and history are full of ideal Hindu women who would rather kill themselves by taking poison...than lose their bodily purity.' Does it imply that even today, when times have changed, a widow is not entitled to future marital happiness? Especially when a widower has no qualms about marrying again? The author continues that a widow is taken care of by her husband's family, or by her own family, and so 'she does not feel helpless or abandoned by her relatives' (p. 47). The abandoned widows at Varanasi will, however, have a different tale to tell. Feminists will view such interpretations that emphasize a women's dependency either on children, social norms, or relatives as being totally regressive.

But the book serves its purpose. The language is lucid, and the analysis methodical. It should be an indispensable asset to anyone interested in understanding the fundamental principles of this ancient and complex religion.

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News and Reports

Ramakrishna Mission Rehabilitation Work

Andhra Pradesh Cyclone Rehabilitation

Arrangements were being made for pre-stressing the fifth concrete girder of the Vivekananda Bridge under construction at Pallavaripalem village in East Godavari district. Earthwork for the approaches on both sides of the bridge, for the diversion canal, and for the existing asphalted road has already been completed, while protective works on the apron and embankments are continuing.

Gujarat Cyclone Rehabilitation

Under the 'Build Your Own House' scheme, Ramakrishna Mission, Porbandar, distributed 11,250 tiles among 41 cyclone-affected poor families living in Kher, Kileshwar, Ajama Pat and four other villages of Bhanvad and Ranavav Talukas in Jamnagar and Porbandar districts.

West Bengal Flood Rehabilitation

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, is continuing its massive rehabilitation programme among the flood-affected people of Lalgola, Jalangi and six other sectors in Murshidabad district. Out of the 676 houses to be constructed, 164 houses have already been completed and 142 are nearing completion. In addition, 1100 low-cost latrines and 31 handpumps are also being installed in the aforesaid areas.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION HELPS FAMILIES OF KARGIL WAR HEROES

The Ramakrishna Mission has contributed Rs.10 lakh to the Prime Minister's 'National Defence Fund' for the families of Kargil war martyrs. The amount was handed over to the Prime Minister on 15 July by Swami Gokulananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi. The Mission has also declared that the sons of the martyrs would be favourably considered for admission to its schools for free education and children of the martyrs studying in other educational institutions would be given financial assistance in the form of stipend or scholarship, if they apply to the Headquarters of the Mission at Belur Math, Howrah, West Bengal 711202.

God on Earth

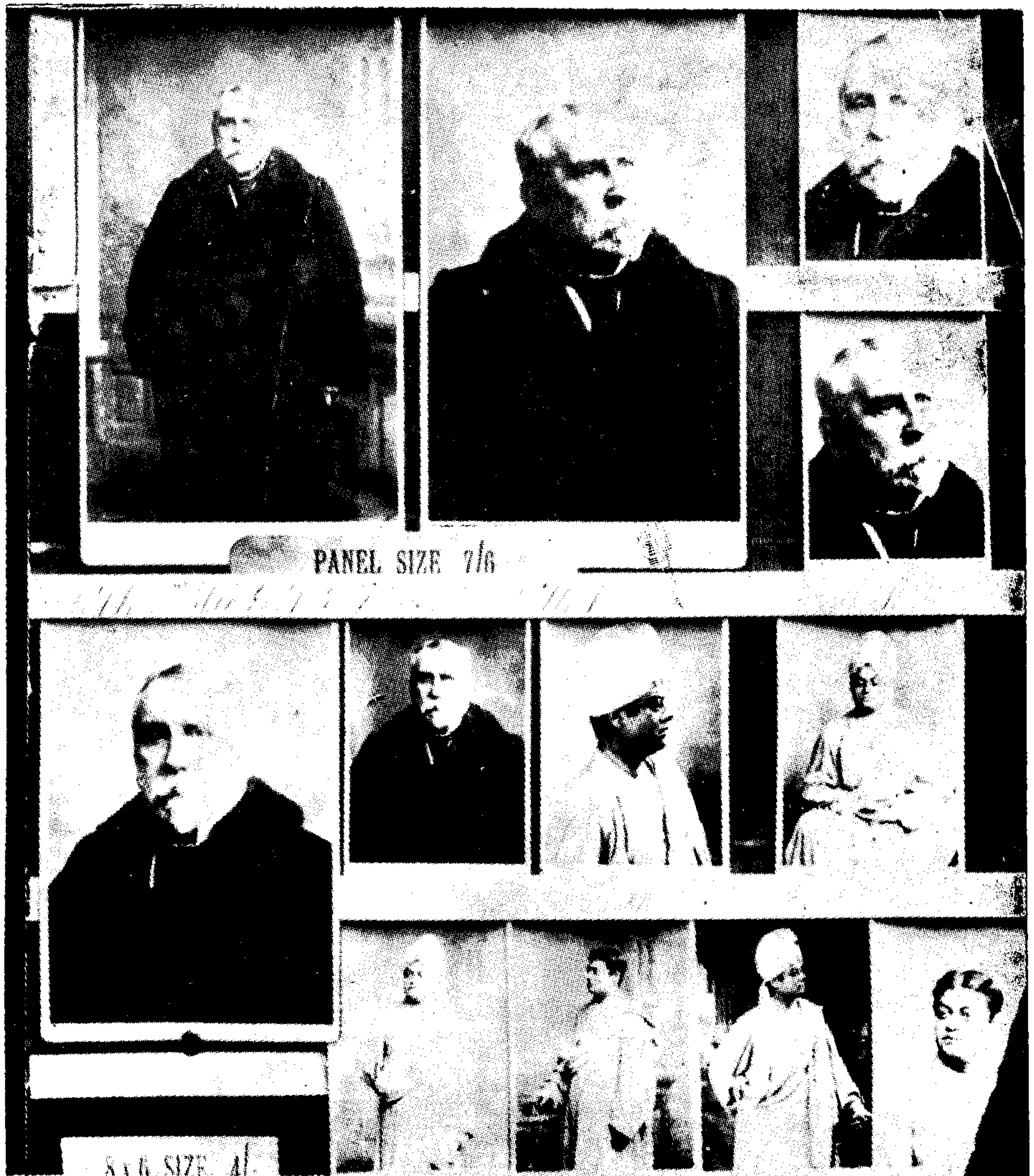
Josephine MacLeod says in the *Reminiscences of Vivekananda* that she had not seen her brother for over a decade. One day, while she and several others were at Ridgely Manor with Swamiji, she received a letter from an unknown person saying that her brother was dying at Los Angeles. She hurried there and saw that he was terminally ill. Upon his bed hung a large picture of Swamiji. MacLeod went over to his landlady, who incidentally happened to be Mrs Blodgett. Josephine said, 'My brother is very ill.' Mrs Blodgett said yes. 'May he die here?' Josephine asked. The landlady replied, 'Oh, yes.' Then, though MacLeod knew Swamiji so very well, she asked, 'Who is that man whose portrait is over my brother's bed?' Mrs Blodgett drew herself up with all the dignity of her seventy years and said, 'If ever there was a God on earth, that is the man.'

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